

August 27, 2024

Rumors Report: Primary Elections, 2024

Overview

The Algorithmic Transparency Institute, a project of the National Conference on Citizenship, is partnering with the League of Women Voters during the 2024 U.S. primaries and general election to inform LWV and its State Leagues about narratives circulating online related to elections, democracy, and voting. This report summarizes key narratives based on internal monitoring by ATI and tips submitted by our volunteer network.

We also outline *data deficits* related to each narrative. A data deficit indicates an open question or lack of good information on a topic. Data deficits represent critical opportunities where advocates can insert good information to help combat the misleading narrative.

Summary of Narratives

- **National Narratives:**
 - **False Claim:** Non-citizens are voting illegally and affecting the outcomes of elections
 - **Confusion:** Why was Elon Musk's PAC asking users for personal information, but not registering them to vote?
- **State Narratives**
 - **Update:** What was the outcome of the County Recorder election in Maricopa County, Arizona?
- **Big Picture: Driving mistrust in elections and voting**

Narratives

False Claim: Non-citizens are voting illegally and affecting the outcomes of elections

The [false claim](#) that non-citizens are voting illegally in large numbers has been repeated consistently throughout this election season. Two recent rumors, in Florida and Texas, claim that non-citizens are being registered to vote at or near DMV offices.

A video of a [voter registration drive](#) in Florida claims that volunteers were registering non-citizens, as the volunteers did not ask for documentary proof of citizenship. However, Florida does not require proof of citizenship to register to vote. Voters must attest under penalty of perjury that they are citizens. The volunteer was not acting improperly. Only citizens can vote in federal elections and Florida state elections.

A similar claim spread regarding voter registration efforts in Texas. An account spread a rumor that volunteers were [registering](#) non-citizens to vote outside a state drivers license facility. Both the county Republican club chair and election administrator said the rumor was [unsubstantiated](#).

Data Deficits

- Voters may lack information about the rarity of illegal non-citizen voting
- Voters may lack information about checks on voter registration systems

Where can we point people for good info?

- [Video of Florida voter registration drive used to mislead on proof of citizenship question](#), from The AP
- [A Fox News host's debunked election conspiracy appears to have prompted a state investigation](#), from The Texas Tribune
- [Why the Myth of Noncitizen Voting Persists](#), from The Brennan Center for Justice

Confusion: Why was Elon Musk's PAC asking voters for personal information, but not registering them to vote?

Earlier this month America PAC, a pro-Trump political action committee backed by X CEO Elon Musk, came under [scrutiny](#) for its misleading advertisements and website.

The PAC's ads [directed](#) users to register to vote via its website. Users who said they lived in states that are not electorally competitive (e.g., Wyoming) were directed to a voter registration page. Users in swing states (e.g., Wisconsin) were directed to a form that collected personal information like age, email address, and phone number – but were not registered to vote.

The PAC is [under investigation](#) by Michigan and North Carolina, though officials say they have not uncovered any illegal activity. Now, the PAC's website directs all users to official voter registration resources, according to [reporting](#) by NBC News.

America PAC leaders [stated](#) to officials in Michigan and North Carolina that “America PAC is utilizing the data it collects to register voters and encourage them to vote.”

We recommend directing people to official, trusted resources for registering to vote. In addition, it is smart for every voter to [check their registration status](#) ahead of any deadlines in their state.

Data Deficits:

- Voters may lack information about trustworthy voter registration tools and resources

Where can we point people for good info?

- [How to confirm your voter registration status](#), from USA.gov
- [North Carolina election board investigates Elon Musk’s pro-Trump PAC after voter data complaint](#), from CNBC
- [State official says they've found no evidence Elon Musk's Super PAC violated voter registration laws](#), from NBC News

Update: What was the outcome of the County Recorder election in Maricopa County, Arizona?

Arizona held state and local primaries in July. One race – for Maricopa County Recorder – has attracted some national attention. The position is partly responsible for election administration in the county and is currently held by Stephen Richter, a [fierce defender](#) of Maricopa County elections. Richer is a longtime Republican and has [attracted ire](#) from some in his party who promote false election denial claims.

Richer recently [lost](#) his primary to his opponent, State Representative Justin Heap. While Heap would not say if he believed the 2020 election was stolen, his [campaign](#) “galvanized [the] anger and mistrust” of election deniers and criticized election administration in Maricopa County.

Heap will [face](#) Democrat Tim Stringham in the general election.

Data Deficits:

- Voters may lack information about ongoing election denial issues in Arizona

Where can we point people for good information?

- [Meet the Arizona Election Official Combating Misinformation One Tweet at a Time](#), from Wired
- [Arizona Republican Who Said 2020 Election Was Not Stolen Loses Primary](#), from The New York Times

The Big Picture: Driving mistrust in elections and voting

This election season has seen a number of false and misleading claims about elections and voting. Astute readers will recognize that several of these rumors are repeated week after week, month after month.

A common string runs through each of these broad narratives, pushing the false narrative that voters should not trust elections to be fair or secure, and that if these “problems” persist the outcome of the 2024 election may not be legitimate.

Repeated False and Misleading Claims

Non-citizens are voting in large numbers, swinging elections

- [Why the Myth of Noncitizen Voting Persists](#), from The Brennan Center for Justice
- [Noncitizens Are Not Voting in Federal or State Elections — Here’s Why](#), from the Brennan Center
- [Debunking the Myths Surrounding Noncitizen Voting](#), from Democracy Docket
- [The Truth about False Claims of Noncitizen Voting](#), from Voting Rights Lab

Election officials enable voter fraud by failing to maintain up-to-date, accurate voter rolls

- [Protections Against Mass Challenges to Voter Eligibility](#), from The Brennan Center for Justice
- [Attacks on Voter Rolls and How to Protect Them](#), from The Brennan Center for Justice
- [Conservative groups want to clean voter rolls, raising concerns about election integrity](#), from PBS

Vote-by-mail, ballot drop boxes, and other alternative voting methods are much more susceptible to fraud than voting in-person

- [How Security Features Prevent Vote-by-Mail Misconduct](#), from The Brennan Center for Justice
- [Voting by mail and using drop boxes are safe and trustworthy ways to vote thanks to numerous security features that protect against fraud.](#), from The Brennan Center for Justice

- [Does mail-in voting lead to widespread voter fraud, foreign interference?](#), from CNN Facts First

Election security problems present in 2020 have not been addressed

- [How to have the hard conversations about who really won the 2020 presidential election – before Election Day 2024](#), from The Conversation
- [Trump’s drumbeat of lies about the 2020 election keeps getting louder. Here are the facts](#), from The AP
- [Results of Lawsuits Regarding the 2020 Elections](#), from The Campaign Legal Center

Election officials can delay or stop the certification of an election if they believe the outcome was not legitimate

- [Election certification, explained](#), from Protect Democracy
- [How State and Local Election Certification Works](#), from The Brennan Center for Justice