

Three types of ELECTION RUMORS

TO AVOID

News
Literacy
Project

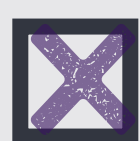


Elections are the lifeblood of democracy, but political campaigns are often rancorous, controversial and polarizing events. As if the misleading claims and attack ads weren't challenging enough for the public, bad actors further muddy the waters by pushing disinformation into our social media feeds.

These harmful falsehoods are designed to cause confusion and to undermine people's faith in American democracy. Election disinformation can be tricky, but the same false narratives and claims tend to get recycled, which can make it easier to spot.

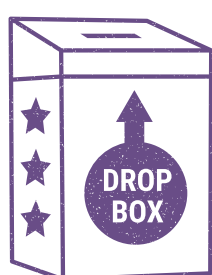
Here are **three common types of election disinformation** you should watch for during the 2022 midterms.

Remember: Reviewing [examples of disinformation from the 2020 election](#) can help you sharpen your disinformation reflexes.



"BALLOT MULE" ACCUSATIONS

Expect to see photos and video of people delivering ballots to drop boxes presented on social media as "evidence" of voter fraud. But keep in mind that **more than 30 states allow someone other than the voter to return absentee or mail-in ballots**. This includes designated agents who return ballots on behalf of people in need of assistance, such as those living in long-term care facilities.



MAIL-IN BALLOT RUMORS

Misinformation about vote-by-mail ballots is common, in part because of genuine misunderstandings. Ballot request applications and sample ballots **often cause confusion**, and people who receive a deceased relative's previously requested mail-in ballot sometimes incorrectly assume that it indicates a lack of election security. Most people don't realize how **common** the crime of **mail theft** is, which makes it easy for **dishonest partisans to falsely frame all mail crimes as attempts to steal or jettison ballots**.

THE REALITY [The Heritage Foundation](#), a conservative think tank, has identified **just 238 cases of election fraud** involving absentee ballots **since 1988**. **238 cases** in 34 years

TOOL Look up your state's ballot collection law using [this table](#) from the National Conference of State Legislatures.

TIP Posts and articles that use loaded and pejorative terms like "ballot trafficking" and "ballot harvesting" are **red flags**. Proceed with caution.

THE REALITY **Americans have been voting by mail since the Civil War**. It's also highly secure: Election officials check personally identifying information and ballot signatures against voter registration records.

TOOL Find your state's **ballot tracking options** using Vote.org's ["Track Your Ballot" webpage](#).

TIP Voting by mail can intuitively seem less secure to many people, but fraud involving mail-in ballots is **almost inconceivably rare**.



POLL WORKER RUMORS

Polling places are a flashpoint for election mis- and disinformation — especially following the introduction of livestreams showing poll workers doing their jobs. But **many aspects of the election process are not well understood by the public**, which opens people up to being deceived by disinformation. Expect to see customary parts of election work — such as **writing on ballots, transcribing damaged ballots or discarding ballot envelopes** — taken out of context and falsely presented as evidence of fraud by bad actors online.

THE REALITY When partisans are motivated to find fraud, they often perceive it in even the most routine or benign tasks.

TOOL The National Conference of State Legislatures' [election resources collection](#) can help you find answers to your questions about how ballots are processed in your state.

TIP We all tend to see the world in ways that affirm our biases and existing views. Brushing up on your understanding of [confirmation bias and motivated reasoning](#) can help you avoid falling victim to manipulation.



"It's the Russians!" Not so fast.

There is [incontrovertible evidence](#) that Russian state actors conducted a significant disinformation campaign to mislead and divide Americans during the 2016 presidential election. But [experts say](#) the **overwhelming majority of election-related misinformation about the 2020 presidential election was domestic in origin**.

Watch out!

Trolls and partisan propagandists use social media to push voter suppression messages targeted at specific areas that tend to vote for candidates they don't like. **Don't let social media posts from non-official sources** — about alleged long lines, closed polling locations or convenient new ways to cast your vote — **affect your plans to vote**.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- [The Election Integrity Partnership website](#)
 - ["10 Factors That Shape a Rumor's Capacity for Online Virality"](#) (Election Integrity Partnership)

- [Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency's "Rumor Control" webpage](#)
- [Vote.org website](#)
- [Vote411.org](#) (League of Women Voters)