

## Threats to Election Workers are Continuing

Since the 2020 election, election workers in nearly every state, at every level of authority, and across the political spectrum, have faced repeated [threats and harassment](#). Targeted simply for doing their jobs and ensuring that votes are cast and counted accurately. The Justice Department Election Threats Task Force has reviewed more than [2,000 threats](#) against election workers, though prosecutions continue to [lag](#). The ongoing pressures have driven many experienced election workers to [abandon their posts](#), leaving their often overworked colleagues to pick up the slack.

## Steps to Address This Danger

Much of the relevant legislation that has been [enacted](#) or [proposed](#) at the state level, and introduced in [Congress](#) in previous sessions, has focused on increasing criminal penalties against the people who threaten election workers. This reactive and punitive approach will do little to prevent the terrifying threats that disrupt the lives of election workers but do not meet the criminal intent bar.

Congress must enact protections for election workers that specifically shield personal information of at-risk workers and their family members that could be used to threaten or attack them. [Doxxing](#) — sharing someone's personal information with malicious intent — has become an integral part of the unceasing attacks against election workers over the past three years. Congress can disrupt the threats posed by increasing volumes of doxxing by giving election workers the ability to proactively protect their personal information, and by classifying the doxxing of election workers as a federal crime.

Giving dedicated public servants tools to protect their personal information, and explicitly criminalizing the use of such information for the purpose of intimidating or threatening them, will provide meaningful and rapid protections for those who steward the election process.

## Doxxing Threats Across the Country

According to a [2024 Brennan Center](#) survey of nearly 1,000 election officials, 41% are concerned about being doxxed. Some of the most disruptive and terrifying threats election workers have received include [specific information](#) about their homes, cars, offices, and children's schools, along with personal phone numbers. Using this kind of personal information alongside explicit or implicit death threats dramatically raises the perceived level of danger for election workers.

- *In December 2020, home addresses and other personal details of Issue One's Faces of Democracy members Brad Raffensperger and Jordan Fuchs, and National Council on Election Integrity member Kim Wyman were published on the Iranian-linked website "Enemies of the People." Their photos were also posted and marked with superimposed crosshairs.*
- *After former President Trump called Al Schmidt, the current Secretary of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, a "RINO" for not challenging the results of the 2020 election, he began to receive threats naming his children, home address and images of his home. Threats online called to put his children's "heads on spikes." These events forced his family to be relocated from their homes and be placed under police protection for months.*
- *During the [2022 midterm elections](#) in Arizona, a Maricopa County supervisor and his family had to leave their home and live under guard in a secure location due to a credible death threat.*
- *In [January 2023](#), the elections director of Cochise County, Arizona resigned after receiving threats including: "If you own a home ... We will find you through the Tax Assessors Website... I guarantee you, We the People will remove you from office."*
- *In January 2024, the Georgia State Capitol received a bomb threat. Gabe Sterling, the Chief Operating Officer of the Georgia Secretary of State later tweeted about the threat and warned of "chaos agents sowing discord" in an election year. Later that night, his house was swatted.*

- During a [webinar](#) hosted by Issue One in April 2024, Carly Koppes, the clerk and recorder in Weld County, Colorado, shared her experiences with targeted harassment, which led her to conceal her pregnancy due to safety concerns.

These ongoing threats to our election officials come from both foreign and domestic entities. In June 2021, the Justice Department launched a task force to investigate the harassment and threats against election officials following the 2020 election. Our Faces of Democracy members were the targets of five (31%) out of the 16 task force cases. In all five cases, the defendant didn't live in the same state as the Faces member. The website "Enemies of the People" included multiple home addresses, photos of homes, personal emails and phone numbers, and photos of state and local officials who have pushed back on former President Trump's "Big Lie." The FBI and CISA later linked the website to Iran, citing "highly credible information indicating Iranian cyber actors almost certainly were responsible for the creation," of the site.

### Bipartisan Precedent and Support for Congressional Action on Doxxing

At the end of 2022, Congress passed the [Daniel Anderl Judicial Security and Privacy Act](#) with broad bipartisan support. The bill protects federal judges' personal identifiable information from resale by data brokers; allows judges to redact personal information displayed on federal government internet sites; and prevents the publication of personal information by others where there is no legitimate news media or other public interest. The Anderl Act also included funding for a federal grant program intended to enable state and local agencies and governments to proactively protect personal information of covered individuals.

A national poll commissioned by Issue One found that the vast majority of Americans — 77% support extending protections for sensitive personal information — like home addresses and license plate numbers — to election officials.

### Getting Anti-Doxxing Policy Ideas Across the Finish Line

The [Election Worker Protection Act of 2023](#), which contained anti-doxxing language, garnered 27 cosponsors in the Senate in the 118th Congress. Bills to protect the personal information of election workers have been introduced during recent legislative sessions in [North Carolina](#), [New Jersey](#), [Nevada](#), [Washington](#), and [Michigan](#) and have been enacted in [California](#), [Colorado](#), and [Oregon](#). [Federal agencies](#) and [outside organizations](#) have released extensive reports and guides.

Building on the framework of the Anderl Act and state and federal election-focused legislation, any election worker anti-doxxing bill must have four elements:

1. A broad definition of election worker that encompasses elected and appointed officials, full-time, part-time, regular, temporary and volunteer workers, and potentially private election technology providers.
2. Outlaw the intentional release or spread of personal information for the purpose of intimidating or threatening election workers and their immediate family members.
3. An affirmative right and process for election workers to request the removal of personally identifying information from government databases, private websites, social media sites, and data brokers.
4. A grant program to provide state and local agencies with funding to create or expand programs designed to protect the personal information of election workers.

If you have any questions or would like to get in touch with Issue One, please contact:

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# 77%

A strong majority of Americans — across party lines — support extending protections of sensitive personal information to election officials.

