

The Honorable Mark Warner  
Chair  
U.S. Senate  
Select Committee on Intelligence  
211 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
Vice Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Select Committee on Intelligence  
211 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

## Written Statement for the Record: U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

Dear Chair Warner and Vice Chair Rubio,

Trust in our elections is the foundation of self-governance in the United States. Without confidence in the electoral process, the legitimacy of government and the will of the people are jeopardized. As we approach the 2024 presidential election, this trust is at risk primarily due to false claims by political actors aiming to win at any cost.

Although the four companies represented at this hearing are American-owned and operated, their technologies and platforms have created opportunities for adversaries to conduct unprecedented influence campaigns aimed at shaping U.S. elections. The algorithmic design of these platforms — which prioritizes reach, engagement, and profit over accuracy — enables foreign actors to manipulate and mislead American voters with false information. The lack of accountability for tech companies poses a serious threat to the upcoming election.

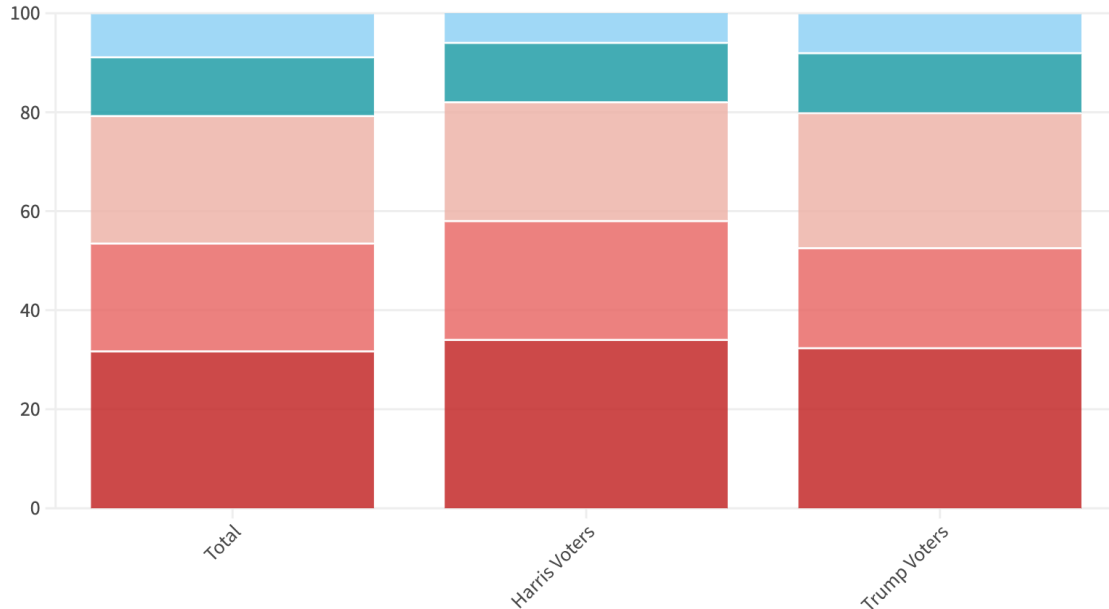
Moreover, **a majority of Americans express concern about how social media will impact the 2024 election.** Issue One conducted a national survey with GQR and Redbud Consulting (N=1,500; September 3-9, 2024) and found that social media is the most popular source of news and information about politics and government. More than half of Americans (54%) are extremely or very concerned about foreign groups from places like Iran, China, and Russia using social media to influence the election. A similar proportion of Americans (54%) are extremely or very concerned about groups using social media to try to cast doubts on the results of the election. A slightly larger majority of Americans (58%) are extremely or very concerned that groups will use social media to incite violence after the election. Finally, the majority of Americans are not confident in social platforms to prevent the spread of false information.

### Growing Threats to Election Officials

In addition to undermining public confidence in elections, the spread of false election information has led to increasing threats, harassment, and intimidation of public servants — [election officials who come from and serve our communities](#). 95% of election officials believe that social media is “a lot” or “somewhat”

Please indicate how concerned you are about foreign groups from places like Iran, China and Russia using social media to influence the election.

Extremely Concerned Very Concerned Somewhat concerned Not Very Concerned Not At All Concerned



Source: Issue One Survey with GQR & Redbud Consulting, N=1,500, September 3-9, 2024



responsible for spreading false information, according to a [Brennan Center](#) survey. Of those officials who have been threatened, 80% feel that social media has made their jobs more dangerous. 3 in 4 officials say that social media companies have not done enough to stop the spread of false information.

Harassment of election officials and threats of violence have become normalized during election seasons, and now persist even in “off-seasons.” This has created hostile environments for election officials at all levels, with voters showing up at the polls prepared to be [confrontational](#), even during local or primary elections. In the 2020 election alone, [Reuters documented](#) more than 850 threatening and hostile messages targeting election officials and staff, 110 of which rose to the level of “true threats” – those that are intended to put a person in fear of death or bodily harm or inflict severe emotional distress and meet the threshold for federal prosecution. Bill Gates, chairman of the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, was not only [labeled as a traitor who should be shot or hung](#), but one person wrote on social media that his daughter should be raped. This violent commentary is now a common occurrence and not a prosecutable offense since they say “should” and do not indicate that the individual commenting plans to take action themselves. Examples of such vile rhetoric are below:



**Truth Spitter** Guest

a year ago

I'm thinking a nasty fall down a long flight of stairs would be more appropriate.

3 0 Reply Share >



**JohnGaltUR1** Guest

a year ago

Tar and feathers to the edge of town then he's on his own.

1 0 Reply Share >

### [Gateway Pundit, June 2023](#)



**Kory Wannamaker**

11 days ago

shes a criminal and she needs to be prosecuted for her federal election fraud.

3 0 Reply Share >



**Mark** → Kory Wannamaker

11 days ago edited

Wrong...she needs to go for Capital Crimes Treason.. a Death Penalty offense to subvert the Will of We the People in order to subvert the leadership WE BY US CONSTITUTION SELECT, NOT HER.

HANG HER HIGH WITH EVERYONE ELSE INVOLVED IN THIS OR SIMILIAR EFFORTS. LOOK WHAT THEY DID TO OUR COUNTRY...ITS A HANGING OFFENSE.

1 0 Reply Share >



**Kory Wannamaker** → Mark

11 days ago

i was being nice, she does need to swing for her treason.

1 0 Reply Share >



**Mark** → Kory Wannamaker

11 days ago

Stop being nice, our adversary would see you and your children dead or imprisoned and starving.

1 0 Reply Share >

### [Gateway Pundit, May 2024](#)



**Bischoff Rulz** @Bischoff\_Rulz · 36m ...

The only "firing" that matters when it comes to treason



8 286

### < Activity

Reply



stevet420 commented: Jena Griswold will hang for the high crimes of treason. Election fraud is no joke. Patriots will take care of you. I would move and change your address... quickly 6h

Reply



stevet420 commented: @adc\_2112 can't wait to watch her swinging from a noose 6h

Reply



stevet420 commented: Your going to hang from the tree of liberty. I bet daddy will be proud of his lying cheating piece of filthy putrescence 6h

Reply



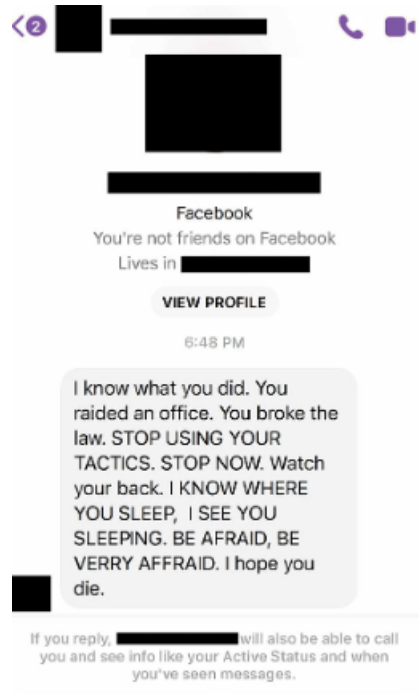
joann.wilson.9634 liked your post. 10h



jennifersharry started following you. 11h

[Follow](#)

Today



Threats have not been limited to swing states where the margins were narrow, nor have they been limited to large jurisdictions. For instance, Aaron Ammons, a member of Issue One's [Faces of Democracy](#) and county clerk of Champaign County, IL (a county where less than 100,000 votes were cast and in a state where Joe Biden won by nearly 17%) [received a letter](#) to his office that threatened his daughter's life: "WE ARE WATCHING TITIANNA DAILY SCHEDULE. IF YOU ARE ELECTED TITIANNA WILL DIE SOON."

As a result of this hostile climate, 92% of local election [officials surveyed by the Brennan Center](#) say that they have taken action to increase security since 2020 – ranging from additional cybersecurity training and protocols to changes to the physical security and layout of their offices. The following are just a few of the myriad examples of measures that election officials are being forced to take because of the spread of false information online and resulting threats:

- A new elections center in [Durham County, NC](#) will include duress buttons, bulletproof glass, and a separate ventilation system for the room where mail is opened.
- Election offices all over the country have held narcan training and changed mail-opening processes after [election offices in five different states received mail with powdery substances](#), including fentanyl.
- In [Pinellas County](#), FL, an extra \$400,000 was allocated in the 2024 budget for physical and cybersecurity this year, including a new security and integrity protocol to have sheriff deputies transport ballots from polling places to the elections office.
- [Earlier this year in Kansas](#), the secretary of state distributed \$1.9 million in federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funding to 84 counties to improve physical security in election offices, including cameras, door locks, and secure storage cabinets, carts, and cages.
- Some election officials have felt it necessary to wear [bulletproof vests to work](#). Josh Zygielbaum, the clerk and recorder for Adams County, Colorado, wears a bulletproof vest to work every day in order to feel safe. "It's sad, but I love what I do," [Zygielbaum said](#). "Without having safe and secure elections, we don't have a democracy. And so it really is the front line of the fight to preserve democracy."

[Doxxing](#) has also become a peril for election administrators across the country. In December 2020, home addresses and other personal details of Brad Raffensperger, Gabe Sterling, Jordan Fuchs, Jocelyn Benson and Kim Wyman were published on the Iranian-linked website "Enemies of the People." Their photos were also posted and marked with superimposed crosshairs. The Enemies hit list was shared on social media using the hashtags #remembertheirfaces and #NoQuarterForTraitors. Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger not only had his own phone number and email exposed and endured harassment and threats, but his wife received harassing, sexual text messages and the home of his daughter-in-law was broken into by citizens who would not accept the 2020 presidential election results.

In addition, Al Schmidt, the current Secretary of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and former Philadelphia city commissioner in 2020, was doxxed when he did not order staff to stop counting valid, legally cast absentee ballots in the 2020 presidential election. Schmidt notes, "What was once a fairly obscure administrative job is now one where lunatics are threatening to murder your children." Schmidt's entire family had to be relocated and receive police protection after his address and photos of his home

were shared online. At least 15 additional Faces of Democracy members have experienced doxxing, the effects of which often extend to family members.

In addition, election officials are experiencing swatting, for example, Jocelyn Benson, Gabe Sterling, and Shenna Bellows. [According to NBC News](#), swatting costs taxpayers roughly \$10,000 every time it occurs.

## **The Exodus of Experienced Election Administrators**

A 2022 [survey by the Brennan Center](#) found that 20% of local election officials were likely to leave their jobs before 2024. Recent [research](#) by Issue One shows that turnover has been even higher, especially in states that are key to the outcome of the Electoral College, where election officials have been targeted with death threats and harassment. In several western states, 40% of local election officials are new to their positions since 2020 — this number exceeds 50% in Arizona and Nevada.

Arizona Secretary of State [Adrian Fontes called this turnover a “plague,”](#) noting that “manufactured problems” are chasing experienced election officials away. The loss of experienced administrators could lead to costly mistakes in a system where technical expertise is critical. These errors, while often innocuous, are likely to be seized upon by hyperpartisan actors as evidence of malfeasance.

## **State and Local Government Response**

Election administrators and elected officials at the state and local levels are doing their part to combat false information and educate voters. HAVA funding reports have shown significant investments in public education around election administration in an attempt to combat false information over the past four years. Those expending funds on public education to combat false narratives and educate voters as a result of false election information include [Alaska](#), [Arizona](#), [Georgia](#), [Indiana](#), [Iowa](#), [Michigan](#), [Nebraska](#), and [New Jersey](#).

Furthermore, [during the 2021-2022 election cycle](#), Colorado’s secretary of state expended \$1,562,774.82 in Election Security Grant (Help America Vote Act federal funds) to prevent the spread of foreign mis- and disinformation. The secretary’s office monitored for foreign mis- and disinformation and countered it by promoting accurate election information in a trusted voice/trusted source campaign. The secretary of state also recruited community leaders to amplify trusted-source-information across their networks.

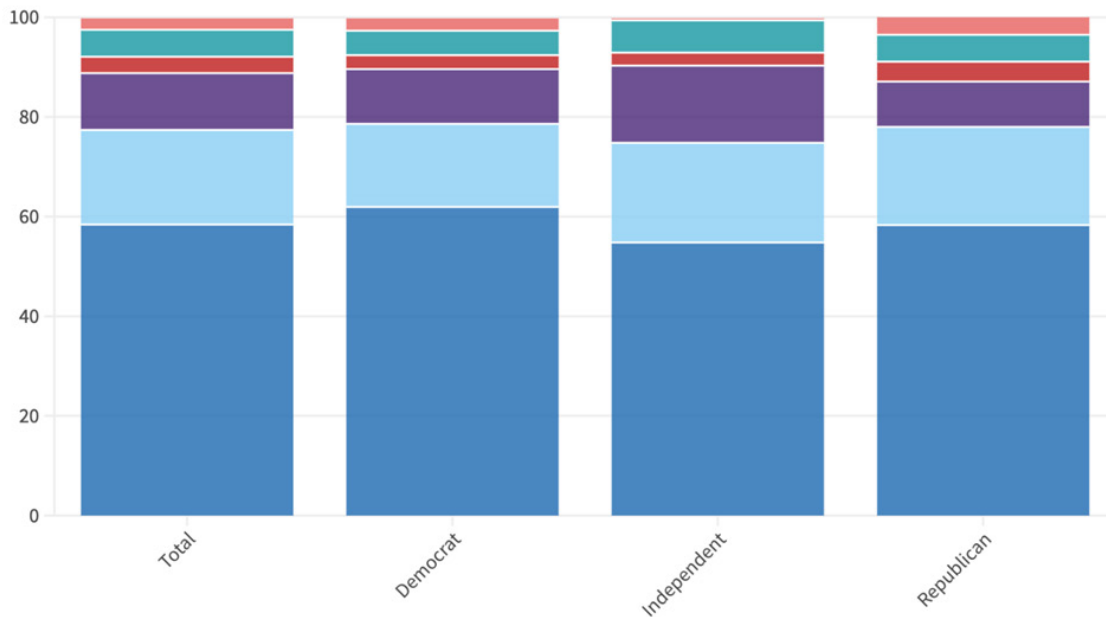
Local municipalities are also sharing the burden of improving physical security for election officials. In Milwaukee, WI, after the executive director received threats nearly a year after the 2020 election, the city spent over \$125,000 in taxpayer dollars to create a security barrier in the Election Commission’s City Hall office and added shatterproof glass and additional security cameras. At their election operations center, the city spent another \$100,000 in private grant funding to add over 20 security cameras, improve exterior lighting, and installed iron mesh barriers on exterior windows. Former Milwaukee Election Commission Executive Director Claire Woodall stated that “It kind of feels like you are inside a prison with the sunlight obstructed by these iron grates, but we really felt like we had no other choice without relocating and spending tens of millions.”

## Public Perception

While [most Americans agree that political violence has no place in our democracy](#), the risks are real. The rhetoric of political elites, combined with disinformation on social media, has created a volatile environment.

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that Congress should take action to address the spread of false election information through the use of fake images and videos generated by artificial intelligence?**

Strongly agree Somewhat agree Neutral Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree Unsure



Source: Issue One and Citizen Data Survey, May 2024, N=1,001. Margin of error is +/- 3.1%.



Americans believe that federal action is urgently needed to address this, including regulating the use of AI-generated fake content in elections. Generative artificial intelligence can be a tool for good, but it can also be used maliciously to create hyperrealistic fake content (“deepfakes”) and deepen divisions. It poses significant risks to election integrity, from spreading false information to undermining trust in authentic content. AI can even be used to generate malware [targeting](#) election infrastructure or [automate](#) harassment of election workers.

Given the decentralized nature of U.S. elections, the burden of addressing this unprecedented issue currently falls on state and local officials. Recently, Grok, an AI chatbot operated by X (formerly known as Twitter), [disseminated false information regarding ballot laws in nine states](#). Urging the platform to respond, [Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon](#) and four other secretaries of state wrote a letter to X owner Elon Musk, urging him to correct the misinformation. Election officials cannot face these challenges alone. New Mexico Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver said the following during a [recent interview](#): “There are literal nation-states out there deliberately attempting to interfere with our election processes, trying to hack into our systems, and spreading mis- and disinformation. It seems fairly obvious to me that as individual states, we are not equipped to combat that type of activity coming at us from nation states.”

## **The Road Ahead: Strengthening Democracy**

The stability of our democracy in 2024 will depend on public trust in the legitimacy of election outcomes. False narratives, divisive political discourse, and ongoing challenges to the legitimacy of election results are eroding public confidence.

We are grateful that the Senate Intelligence Committee is addressing these issues, and we urge Congress to act quickly to create mechanisms for accountability for tech platforms. We also call on members of Congress to make clear commitments to accept the outcome of the 2024 election.

Sincerely,

Carah Ong Whaley, PhD, Director of Election Protection, Issue One

Claire Woodall-Vogg, Senior Advisor, Faces of Democracy, Issue One

Angelina Clapp, Campaign Manager, Election Protection, Issue One

Zach Wamp, Former U.S. Rep (R-TN), National Council on Election Integrity Co-chair, Issue One

Kim Wyman, Former Secretary of State of Washington; Senior Elections Expert at the Bipartisan Policy Center's Elections Project