

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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### Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney Committee on Oversight and Reform Roundtable on “On the Frontlines: Responding to the Threat of Election Misinformation” August 11, 2022

Before we begin, I would like to take a moment to remember the members of our congressional family we lost last week: Representative Jackie Walorski, Zach Potts, and Emma Thomson. Our thoughts are with their families as we all continue to mourn.

To accommodate Members who are traveling from Representative Walorski’s memorial service this morning, we delayed the roundtable for 45 minutes so Members would have an opportunity to join.

Welcome to today’s roundtable on election misinformation. Nearly a year ago, this Committee held a hearing on the fraudulent election audit in Maricopa County, Arizona. This so-called audit was inspired by lies about election fraud spread by former President Trump and his allies.

During the hearing, Maricopa County Supervisor Bill Gates testified that this effort to undermine the integrity of our elections was, and I quote: “the biggest threat to our democracy in my lifetime.”

Supervisor Gates is a Republican, as are members of our panel today. But he spoke out against this campaign of threats and lies because protecting our democracy is more important than partisan politics.

**Today, the Committee released a report detailing new findings from our investigation into the effects of election misinformation and disinformation. We asked local election officials in four states—Arizona, Florida, Ohio, and Texas—how election lies are impacting their ability to do their jobs.**

**What we heard is chilling. Election officials are under siege. They face growing campaigns of harassment and threats, all driven by false accusations of fraud.**

For example, we learned that after the 2020 election, conspiracy theorists Alex Jones, Roger Stone, and Mike Lindell singled out one Florida election administrator. They publicized his office phone number and encouraged listeners to call with the message that, quote, “they are watching him” and that, quote, “he is a piece of crap.” He reported receiving countless threatening calls.

In Texas, the spread of conspiracy theories in national media outlets drove truly despicable threats. On social media, people threatened to kill one election administrator and, quote, “let his lifeless body hang in public until maggots drip out of his mouth.”

Other messages included chilling threats against election administrators’ children, including one stating, and I quote: “I think we should end your bloodline.”

**The people who run elections in some states are also being subjected to outrageous new civil and criminal penalties for simply doing their jobs. Republican state legislatures in each state we investigated have**

**proposed or enacted laws that make it far more difficult to administer elections.**

**Local election officials told the Committee that they tried to push back against these laws—because they did not improve election security, would increase costs, and were inspired by false claims. But Republican legislatures enacted them anyway.**

**These pressures have been so great that experienced election professionals are quitting their jobs.**

**Let's be clear: The election lies pushed by former President Trump and his allies have inspired truly dangerous efforts to subvert elections. These schemes are not about fairness, election security, or the truth. They make it harder for Americans to cast their ballots, but easier for dishonest officials to overturn the results of elections they don't like.**

**Today's report details a set of actions that Congress and the Administration can take to begin addressing this problem.**

**This includes establishing a coordinated federal approach to protecting our elections.**

**It also includes ensuring states and local governments have the resources they need to administer elections, while also providing accurate information to Americans, and protecting election workers.**

**We also must establish meaningful penalties for anyone who threatens or intimidates election officials.**

The time to act to protect our elections is now. I hope all my colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, will join me in this effort.

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