

Rumors Report: 2024 General Election

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. 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:** Donald Trump staged his own assassination attempt
- **False Claim:** Exit polling can detect election fraud
- **Scam:** Text messages say they'll help with voter registration, but steal information

- **State Narratives:**

- **Update:** Undated mail-in ballots will not be counted in Pennsylvania

Narratives

False Claim: Donald Trump staged his own assassination attempt On Sunday, U.S. Secret Service stopped what appeared to be an attempt to assassinate former Pres. Donald Trump – the second attempt in just over two months. Trump [reported](#) hearing shots while playing golf with friends at Trump International golf course. An agent fired his weapon upon [discovering](#) “a firearm poking out of shrubbery...about 400 to 500 yards from where Trump was playing.” The suspect, Ryan Wesley Routh, absconded before being [captured](#). Routh has been [charged](#) with two gun-related crimes, and may face additional charges.

There is no evidence to support conspiratorial claims that Donald Trump or his campaign staged the apparent assassination attempt as a way to garner positive attention. Similar false claims [followed](#) the first shooting in Butler, Pennsylvania.

Data Deficits

- Voters may lack information in a breaking news scenario

Where can we point people for good info?

- [Here's everything we know about the apparent assassination attempt on Trump](#), from NPR
- [Claims that an apparent assassination attempt against Trump was staged are baseless](#), from PolitiFact
- [Ryan Routh: What we know about suspect in Trump assassination attempt](#), from Reuters

False Claim: Exit polling can detect election fraud

A claim has spread online stating that vote-by-mail is less secure than in-person voting because exit polling does not capture responses from VBM voters. This suggests, misleadingly, that exit polling can be used as a tool to detect election fraud and that exit polling does not capture data about voters who do not vote in person.

In fact, exit polling is not used to detect election fraud. Exit polling asks voters about their voting choices as they are [leaving](#) their polling location. This is different from traditional polling, which asks voters about their [intended](#) choices. In addition, at least one exit polling firm says they [reach](#) by-mail voters, in-person early voters, and in-person Election Day voters.

In the United States, exit polls used by ABC, CBS, NBC, and CNN are [performed](#) by Edison Research, a market research and polling firm. These news networks, together, make up the [National Election Pool](#) (NEP) consortium. Other news networks may do their own independent exit polling. NEP organizations [decide](#) what questions will be asked in the poll and Edison Research staff decides what precincts will be polled and performs the exit polling. Exit polling data is shared with NEP news organizations, which each make their own projections based on the data.

This data is used by media outlets to [make projections](#) about what the outcome of the election will be. This allows news organizations to make early predictions while waiting hours or days for

official results. Additionally, exit polls [collect](#) demographic information from respondents, which give greater insight into how different groups vote.

Like traditional polling, exit polls have certain [limitations](#). They survey only a small portion of the electorate and may not sample a truly random group. Voters who are enthusiastic about their choices may be more likely to respond; voters can also lie to pollsters about their choices. All polls are subject to a margin of error. Thus, exit polls are not a reliable way to determine if election fraud has occurred. And to reiterate: exit polling firms have methods for reaching early, absentee, and by-mail voters through calls, texts, emails, and online surveys.

Differences between exit polls and official results should not be considered an indication of fraud or malfeasance; rather, it's the reality of the limitations of polling voters.

Data Deficits:

- Voters may lack information about what exit polling information is used for ●
- Voters may lack information about the limitations of polling in general

Where can we point people for good info?

- [Exit polling](#), from Ballotpedia
- [Election Day Coverage](#), from Edison Research

Scam: Text messages say they'll help with voter registration, but steal information

Texting scams are nothing new – and they can target voters ahead of Election Day. This cycle, people in multiple [states](#) have [reported](#) receiving [scam](#) text messages [asking](#) them to register to vote. While political campaigns and groups may be doing legitimate outreach to make sure voters are ready for Election Day, scammers can take advantage of unwitting targets.

In general, it is best to use known, trustworthy, official sources for information about voting and elections – including voter registration. Generally, it is [unwise to trust](#) unsolicited text messages or to provide an unknown sender with personal information. If you or a voter receives a text message you believe is a scam, reach out to your local elections office to let them know and confirm the information. Most local boards of election do not [outreach](#) voters via text message, and legitimate voter assistance organizations will never ask for money or donations in exchange for help registering to vote.

Make sure voters know how to check their registration status using trustworthy sources and encourage them to go to their local elections office website for the most accurate and up-to-date information.

As always, if voters are being inundated with messages about the election, they can always block the numbers.

Data Deficits:

- Voters may lack information about texting scams
- Voters may lack information about how to register to vote

Where can we point people for good information?

- [How to tell if a political text message is a scam](#), from CBS News
- [New political text message making the rounds could be a scam, BBB warns](#), from NBC News Verify

Update: Undated mail-in ballots will not be counted in Pennsylvania

An ongoing question regarding Pennsylvania's mail-in ballots made it to the state Supreme Court recently. In Pennsylvania, voters must write the current date on the ballot envelope before returning it. In recent elections, this has [caused problems](#) when voters wrote incomplete or incorrect dates (e.g., writing their birth date). In 2022, more than 10,000 ballots were reportedly [disqualified](#) due to misdating.

A group of organizations [sued](#) over the ““meaningless”” requirement. Election officials log and [time-stamp](#) all mail-in ballots as they are received. Election officials do not rely on the handwritten date to determine when the ballot was completed. However, the state Supreme Court ruling means that all 2024 election ballots will need to have [complete](#) dates to be counted.

Data Deficits:

- Voters may lack information about changes to VBM ballot envelopes
- Voters may lack information about how to correctly fill out their ballots

Where can we point people for good information?

- [High court voids ruling on mail ballots missing handwritten dates](#), from Spotlight PA •

[Voter Support: Mail-in and Absentee Ballots](#), from The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania