

# MESSAGING GUIDE & DIGITAL TOOLKIT

## Protect Our Elections

### *How to Confront False Claims and Ensure the Will of the People Prevails*

*Last updated November 9, 2022*

**In 2020, we defeated Trump both with our votes and our efforts to ensure they were counted.** Now, Trump Republicans are trying to overthrow the will of the people at the ballot box, through the courts, and by blocking policies the majority of Americans favor.

**This is a digital toolkit for protecting our elections from Trump Republicans' ongoing criminal conspiracy against our nation.** By coming together and repeating the same narrative, we can neutralize false claims before they take hold and ensure voters decide who governs in our name this fall.

We know that if our words don't spread, they don't work. As such, we are honored to have you use this language verbatim. The pieces of creative are yours to use **freely without need for attribution** in your advocacy efforts. You can also use them as inspiration when crafting new content in your own voice and tailored to your audiences.

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# MESSAGING GUIDANCE

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## Introduction

From the January 6th attack on our country to their broader ongoing criminal conspiracy to overthrow our elections and take away our freedoms, Trump Republicans have proven they will do anything to get and hold onto power. Ahead of, during and in the aftermath of the midterm elections this November, we must make clear to voters what is at stake: our freedom to choose our own leaders in free and fair elections and have a say in the decisions that impact our lives.

Further, we must inoculate against the false claims we know that Trump Republicans will make and dangerous actions we know that they will take to overthrow the will of the people before, on, and following election day. The following research-based narratives are designed to persuade and mobilize base, surge, and swing voters to protect our elections from Trump Republicans' attacks on our freedoms.

**This toolkit will be routinely updated in response to offer guidance as real-world events unfold.** We are planning to add content and messaging to help organizations and communicators shape the public conversation around protecting our elections and ensuring the will of the people prevails ahead of, during, and after voting.

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## Narratives

### Narrative: Our Topline Message

*This election is a victory for Americans who want a fairer, freer future for all. Across races, places and parties, we saw this election as a choice between freedom and fascism and voted to protect our families and our futures. Trumpist politicians engaged in a criminal conspiracy to overthrow the will of the people and then ran in the very elections they seek to eliminate, but voters overcame their barriers to cast our ballots and rejected*

*their efforts to overturn results. This election shows, like in generations before, that when Americans understand freedom is on the line, we fight to extend the promise of liberty and justice to all.*

→ Guidance for anyone: For support messaging losses in specific states, please read and use [this template](#).

### **Narrative: Count Every Vote**

*For democracy to work for all of us, voters must have our voices heard and our votes counted. By tracking from start to finish and verifying the identity of each ballot, certified election officials ensure that each voter casts one ballot and that every eligible vote is counted accurately. But we've seen that when Trumpist politicians lose, they lie and lash out, spreading false claims to overthrow the outcomes of elections. Voters have done our job and turned out in this election. And now our election officials are doing theirs. Together, we will ensure every vote is counted and make this a place where 'we the people,' not a corrupt faction, determine who represents us and governs in our name.*

### **Narrative: Attempted Overthrow of Race**

*[STATE RESIDENTS] believe that voters pick our leaders, our leaders do not pick their voters. The majority of us have turned out and cast our votes for [Dem Candidate], wanting a government that will protect our freedoms and enable us to provide for our families. That's why [Dem Candidate] has earned more of our votes. Trump Republicans' attempts to deny reality, re-start a fight they lost, and undermine our most basic freedom to choose who represents us are just further examples of why most of us rejected [Rep Candidate]. We are ready to move forward together to make this a place where every one of our families can thrive.*

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## **Memos and Templates**

→ Guidance for reporters and members of the press: For a memo about how to report on the elections over the following weeks, please read and use [Preparing Voters for Election Night and Beyond](#).

→ Guidance for candidates: For a memo about pre-bunking false claims and contending with an opponent who refuses to concede, please read and use [Messaging Guidance When Loser Refuses to Concede](#).

→ Guidance for advocates: For support messaging incidents of violence, voter silencing, and other anti-voter attacks, please read and use [this template](#).

→ Guidance for anyone: For support messaging losses in specific states, please read and use [this template](#).

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## Messaging Best Practices

### Leading with Shared Values

Examples:

- *In America, voters pick our leaders. Our leaders should not pick which voters to hear and which to silence.*  
(short version) *In America, voters pick our leaders. Our leaders don't pick their voters.*
- *Americans value our freedoms — our freedom to vote, to elect who governs in our name, and to have an equal say in the decisions that impact our lives.*
- *In America, we value our freedoms to make our voices heard, pick our own leaders, and decide our own futures.*
- *For democracy to work for all of us, it must include us all.*

### Saying What We Are For and Avoiding Negation

In their efforts to overthrow the will of the people, Trump Republicans will relentlessly and deliberately spread false claims. We must resist the understandable urge to directly refute everything they allege (e.g., “there is no evidence of fraud” “fraud did not occur”). When we repeat their claims, in an effort to refute them, we actually lend them credence. Studies show that information that feels more familiar to people, because they have heard it repeated more often, registers as more credible. This is known as the illusory truth effect. So, repeating the “f-word” (fraud) actually risks making people think nefarious activities in voting occurred. Thus, when contenting with their falsehoods, we do so by affirming our values within our own frame, then exposing how and why our opponents sow doubts and stoke fears. Instead of repeating their lies, for example, we call out how they deliberately

spread false claims to turn us against each other, take away our freedoms, and impose their will – and remind our audience that by joining together, we will protect our elections.

Example:

*Across our races, backgrounds, and parties, Americans value our freedoms – our freedom to vote, to elect who governs in our name, and to have an equal say in the decisions that impact our lives. But Trump Republicans are deliberately spreading false claims against our elections so they can turn us against each other, take away our freedoms, and get and hold onto power. We're onto them. By joining together, we will protect our freedoms, decide our own futures, and ensure the will of the people prevails in our elections.*

## **Naming A Villain**

As in any effective story, we must name a clear villain. This is even more imperative for our efforts to protect our elections because Trump Republicans will loudly and insistently cast our voters and leaders as villains, blaming Democrats and pointing the finger at Black, brown, and new Americans to peddle their false claims. If we fail to impugn the true culprits, even by naming harms without an agent (ie. “election workers are being threatened”), then our opponent's explanation for the problem goes uncontested in the public conversation, leaving people to trust their account or fill in for themselves who is at fault. Fortunately, the villain in this story is crystal clear: Trump Republicans (or MAGA Republicans or Trumpist politicians). Or, when talking about threats to our elections specifically, “election corrupters” or “election conspirators.” We must articulate not just who they are and what they are doing, but ascribe motivations behind their nefarious actions. Here's what it looks like to name the villain in an active voice:

Examples:

- *From trying to take away our freedom to vote in fair elections to our freedom to decide if and when we grow our families, Trump Republicans want to overthrow the will of the people so they can rule for the wealthy, white few.*
- *Trumpist politicians are trying to get and hold onto power by taking away our freedoms, fueling violence, spreading false claims about our elections, and siding with corporations who gouge our prices over Americans families.*
- *Criminal conspirators are trying to overthrow our elections so they can get and hold onto power.*
- *A handful of Republican election criminals want to overthrow the will of the people so they can take away our freedoms*
- *Election conspirators are using mass voter silencing to take away our freedom to vote. By allowing anyone to challenge another person's vote, they are sowing*

*chaos and trying to cancel out votes from people who don't look, live, or love like them.*

## Words to Embrace and Replace

EMBRACE	REPLACE	BECAUSE...
Election Overthrow Plot Baseless accusations Voter silencing	Contested Election Contest Challenge	"Contested" obscures motive and suggests merit to their claims. Overthrow and voter silencing framing most resonant and damning
Election Overthrowers	Election Deniers	We need a term that encapsulates the scale, acute threat, and ongoing nature of Trump Republicans' plans
Mass voter silencing	Mass voter challenges	"Challenge" lends the appearance of legitimacy and normalcy to their actions, while "silencing" clearly communicates their intended impact
Anti-American	UnAmerican	It's sadly very American to do undemocratic things. However, it's also harmful to Americans
Promoted, paid for and pardoned	Spread the Big Lie Lured people with lies	Lie spreading is our weakest proof point, evokes "free speech" defense
Trump Republicans MAGA Republicans	Republicans Extremists	Having a specified label that applies only to them not us helps voters credit our claims

Protect our freedoms Ensure the will of the people prevails	Defend our democracy Protect our democracy	Democracy doesn't presently exist and is an abstraction
Overthrow the will of the people Seize power to rule for the wealthy few	Undermine our government Undermine our democracy	Need to make stakes personal and GOP motivations clear

## The Trumpist Commandments

1. Thou shalt have no other God before Trump.
  - a. Trump Republicans have taken Trump as a [false prophet](#), [purging](#) the party of nearly all elected officials who courageously stood for truth by calling out Trump for inciting and promoting the Jan 6th attack on our country, and by attacking the religious beliefs of any person of faith who criticizes Trump.
2. Thou shalt pick which voters to hear and which to silence.
  - a. Trump Republicans passed restrictions in states covering over [55 million eligible voters](#), including closing polling locations and drop boxes, restricting mail in voting, [removing people](#) from voter rolls, and shortening or even eliminating early voting days.
3. Thou shalt not count every vote.
  - a. Trump Republicans are trying to block counting every vote through new, confusing requirements to justify rejecting ballots, such as in [Texas](#), and attempting to cancel mail-in votes in [several swing states](#) and military ballots in [Wisconsin](#).
4. Remember the insurrection day and keep it holy.
  - a. Election overthrowers are on the ballot for Secretary of State in 13 states, Governor in 18 states and Attorney General in 10 states. Wisconsin Republican Sen. Ron Johnson has continually claimed that January 6th was not an armed insurrection and that protesters ["did teach us how you can use flagpoles, that kind of stuff, as weapons."](#) There are at least 11 GOP

candidates running for Senate, House and governor seats this fall who were actually [in attendance at the Jan. 6 rally](#). Trump Republicans [corrupted religious symbols for their January 6th attack on our country](#), substituting [observance of their insurrection](#) for the holy day [Epiphany](#).

5. Thou shalt deny food and water to voters.
  - a. Despite virtually every major faith tradition's commitment to loving one another and to helping the poor, Trump Republicans in [Georgia](#) made it illegal to provide even bottles of water to voters waiting in line at the polls.
6. Thou shalt corrupt our elections with violence.
  - a. In contrast to values of peace, Trump Republicans have incited attacks or threats of violence, from the [violent attack on the Speaker of the House's family](#) to threats made against Democratic candidates in places such as [Pennsylvania](#) and [Arizona](#). Additionally, thousands of Americans have been recruited by [right-wing conspiracy groups](#) and planned to show up en masse to harass voters across faiths.
7. Thou shalt file frivolous lawsuits.
  - a. Trump Republicans have filed [a record number of election-related lawsuits](#), the majority of which seek to restrict the freedom to vote or disrupt the count, with [at least 73 of these lawsuits](#) brought by the Republican National Committee. In Michigan, for example, Republican secretary of state candidate Kristina Karamo [filed a lawsuit](#) two weeks before Election Day asking a judge to require residents of Detroit to vote in person or obtain their ballots in person at the clerk's office.
8. Thou shalt take away thy neighbors' freedoms.
  - a. In [Georgia](#) and other key states, Trump Republicans are trying to use mass voter silencing to take away Americans' freedom to vote, challenging the ballots of their neighbors
9. Thou shalt bear false witness against thy neighbors.
  - a. Conspiracy theories and [debunked propaganda films like 2000 Mules](#) used by [Trumpist candidates across the country](#) to spread false claims about – and to try to take away the ballots of – Black, brown and new American voters.
10. Thou shalt overthrow the will of the people.
  - a. In places like [AZ](#), [MN](#), and [NH](#), GOP candidates are actively and already denying the validity of any 2022 election outcomes that result in their

potential losses. Trump himself has stated he will begin 2022 [election contestation battles starting with Philadelphia](#).

# DIGITAL CONTENT

Our partners at IntoAction created GIFs and memes that bring to life the recommendations above. These are available for you to use ***freely without need for attribution***. We encourage you to post them in connection with the sample social media text below and to copy any of the messaging we provide below.

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## Hashtags:

#ProtectOurFreedoms

#CountEveryVote

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## A Note on Accessibility:

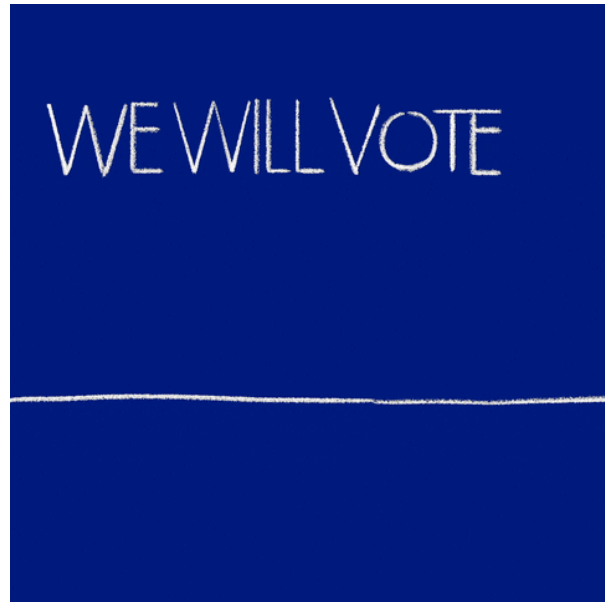
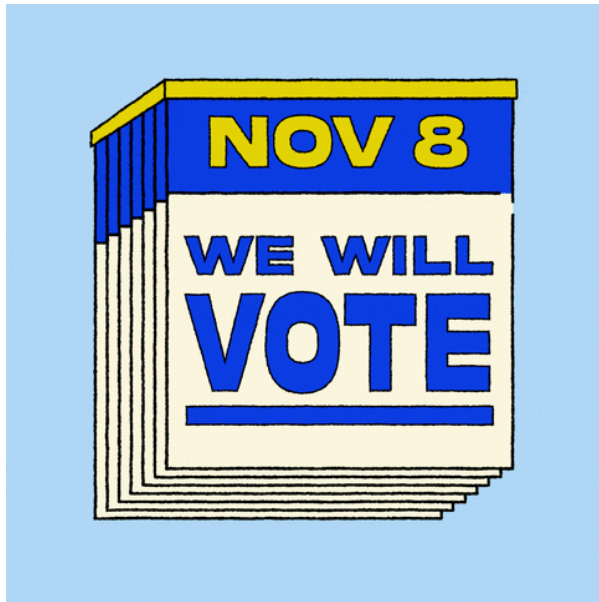
We've added alt text to each of the pieces of creative below, which helps screen-reading software describe the images to people who are visually impaired. We'd encourage people to include the alt text for the images and gifs when posting on social media or creating toolkits like this. (Right click the image and select "alt text" to view.)

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## Collection 1: Count Every Vote

### Sample GIFs

To download these GIFs, visit [this IntoAction library](#).



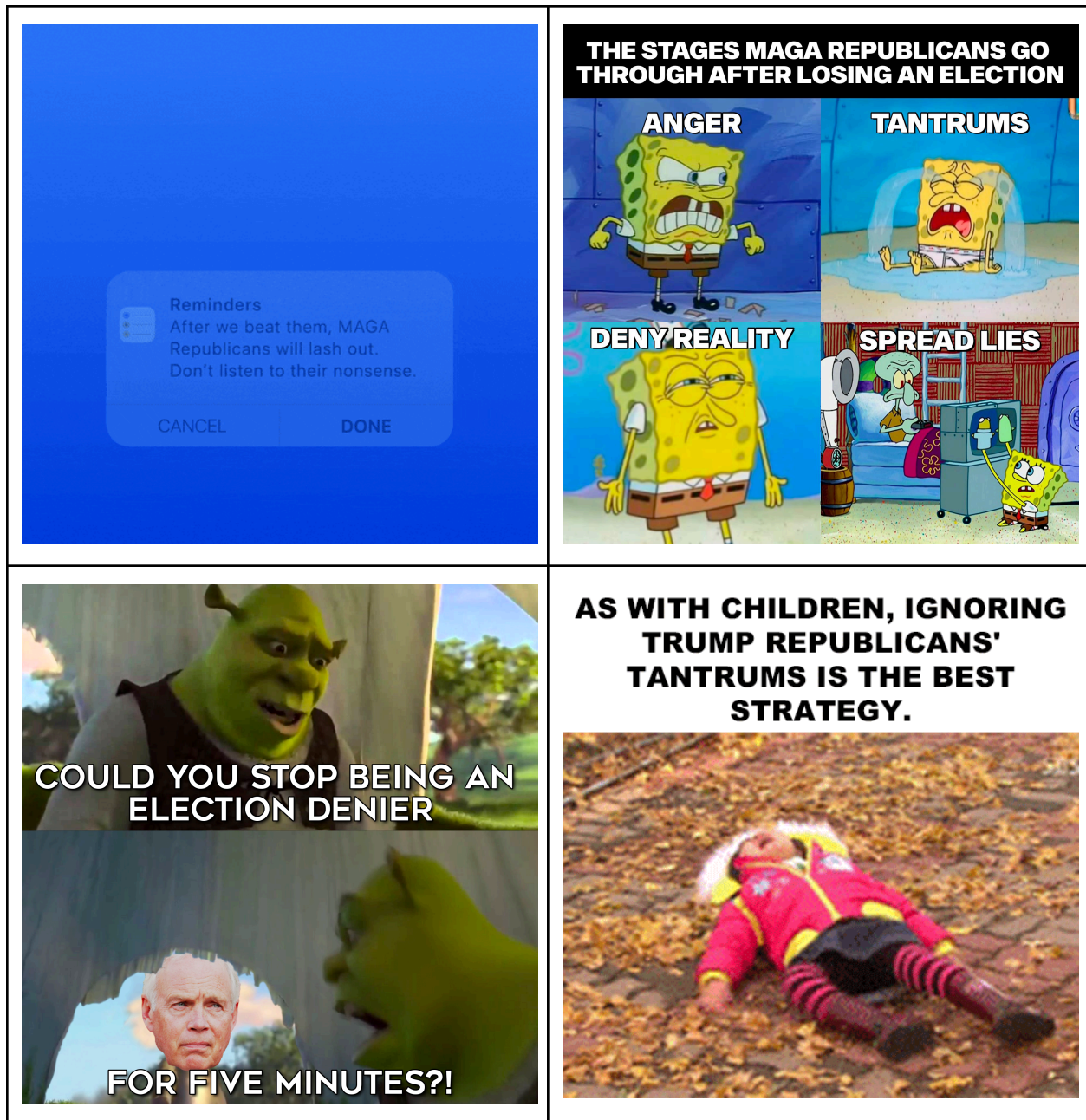
### Sample Social Media Posts

- Across [pick three: race, place, background, party, faith, etc], most of us believe that voters pick our leaders, our leaders shouldn't pick their voters.
- We've seen that when Trump Republicans lose, they lie and lash out. They pass laws to keep us from voting, incite their supporters to intimidate poll workers, and want to let state politicians overthrow the outcomes of elections.
- If Trump Republicans think they can silence our voices – they've got another thing coming. #CountEveryVote
- Together, we will demand election officials #CountEveryVote and make this a place where 'we the people,' not a corrupt faction, determine who represents us and governs in our name.

## Collection 2: Protect Our Elections

### Sample Content

To download these GIFs/memes and find more, visit [this IntoAction library](#).



## Sample Social Media Posts

- In America, voters pick our leaders. No matter our [pick three: color, background, party, zip code, faith, income, age, birthplace, genders, etc], most of us believe our leaders in [your state] should not pick which voters to hear and which to silence.
- Trump Republicans in [your state] are trying to get and hold power by taking away freedoms and handing kickbacks to corporations who gouge prices and dodge taxes. And we've seen, when they lose, they lie and lash out to try and overthrow elections.
- Trump Republicans want to take away our freedoms, control our lives, and overthrow our will. And we've seen, when they lose, they lie and lash out to try and overthrow elections. Ensuring the will of the people prevails is one critical part of the broader push for our freedoms.
- No matter [choose 2-3: what we look like, who we vote for, where we grew up, how much money is in our wallets, how we pray, who we are, who we love, the color of our skin, our genders, or how long we've called XXX town/state home], most of us want leaders who govern in our interests. Across races, places and parties, millions of Americans saw this election as a choice between freedom and fascism and voted to protect our families and our futures.
- After Trump Republicans like [insert a specific name, e.g. Rep. Kevin McCarthy] engaged in a criminal conspiracy to overthrow the will of the people without consequences, they ran in the very elections they seek to eliminate. We overcame their barriers to cast our votes and are rejecting their efforts to overturn results.
- This election shows that we must make clear Trumpism's threat and make real freedoms' promise.
- Across [pick three: races, places, backgrounds, generations, faiths, etc], when Americans have understood that freedom is on the line, we have fought to extend the promise of liberty and justice to all.

## BROUGHT TO YOU BY



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### Includes Content From



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### Contact Information

For any questions relating to messaging, digital strategy, or Race Class Narrative research, contact We Make The Future Action at [info@wemakethefutureaction.us](mailto:info@wemakethefutureaction.us).

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### Additional Resources

For more research and recommendations, check out [Research Collaborative](#).

You can check out their previous memos on [swing voters' perceptions of the January 6th attack](#), [messaging to swing voters around the attack](#), overviews of January 6th and the hearings ([June 2022](#), [May 2022](#), [Jan. 2022](#), [Nov. 2021](#)), and other recent memos examining [how we should characterize the GOP](#) and [perceptions of Biden and Congress](#).