

AI-generated political videos blurred reality in Louisiana's Republican Senate primary

Artificial intelligence was weaponized in Louisiana's 2026 Republican U.S. Senate primary last spring, when fabricated videos of two candidates in a runoff raised questions about how voters can distinguish political parody from misinformation.

The controversy involved [U.S. Rep. Julia Letlow](#) and [Louisiana Treasurer John Fleming](#), who competed for the Republican nomination after beating [Sen. Bill Cassidy](#) in the May 16 primary. Letlow ultimately defeated Fleming in the June 27 runoff.

During the runoff, manipulated videos placed the candidates in scenes that were made up. The most personal example was an AI-generated video depicting Letlow discussing the death of her husband, Rep. [Luke Letlow](#). A digitally created version of the congresswoman appeared to say that she had planned to become a university president before her husband died, and she was "appointed" to his seat in Congress.

That statement was fabricated. Letlow was not appointed to Congress. She won a [March 2021 special election](#) to represent Louisiana's 5th Congressional District after Luke Letlow died from complications related to COVID-19 in 2020 before he could take office.

Fleming shared the AI-generated video on social media June 11. In his post, he said he had not created it but believed it was circulating for a reason, according to [Fox 8 New Orleans](#).

Letlow responded the following day with a video of her own. [She accused Fleming of crossing a line by sharing content](#) that invoked her late husband and demanded that he remove it. She described the post as an attack on her family rather than a legitimate criticism of her record.

The fabricated clip combined those words with real events from her life, including her university career and her husband's death. That mixture of fact and invention made the video capable of misleading viewers who did not recognize it as artificially-generated political content.

Fleming was also depicted in AI-generated campaign material. One video titled “[All Aboard John Fleming’s Border Bus](#),” portrayed Fleming driving a bus carrying immigrants into Louisiana. The video was posted to YouTube on April 24 and attacked Fleming over immigration policy. [Axios New Orleans](#) later identified the depiction as a deepfake used during the Republican primary.

The bus video illustrates the difference between political opinion and fabricated evidence. A campaign may criticize a candidate’s immigration record or argue that a policy would encourage illegal immigration. Showing a realistic-looking version of that candidate personally driving a bus, however, creates an event that did not happen.

Fleming later characterized the videos as technologically-sophisticated parody and argued that false claims were a larger problem than the use of AI itself. [He told Axios](#) that dishonest statements can be made with or without artificial intelligence.

Political misinformation existed long before generative AI. The technology changes how those claims can be presented by allowing creators to manufacture apparent evidence of a candidate’s speech or behavior. Neither the Letlow video nor the Fleming bus video documented an authentic event. They were constructed political messages using the candidates’ likenesses.

Their presentation as parody does not necessarily prevent people from misunderstanding them. Viewers may encounter a video after it has been downloaded, reposted or separated from its original caption. A disclosure can disappear as the content moves between accounts and platforms.

The Letlow video posed an additional concern because Fleming, an opposing candidate and elected state official, shared it with his own followers. Although he did not claim to have created it, reposting the video gave it a larger audience and attached it to a recognizable political source.

The episode also demonstrated how candidates can occupy both sides of the synthetic media debate. Fleming circulated a fabricated depiction of Letlow, then objected when other AI-generated videos targeted him. In each case, the technology turned a political attack into an apparent recording of a candidate’s words or actions.

