We're in This Together.
Disinformation Stops with You.

Disinformation and Elections: How Election Officials Can Respond

Through the #Protect2020 campaign, the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) works together with national partners to identify, respond to, and mitigate the spread of disinformation (false or misleading information) that may impact the nation's elections. Reducing the circulation of disinformation requires engagement of all citizens who are part of the elections process, including you.

Election officials play a critical role in countering the proliferation of disinformation about the administration of the 2020 elections. Disruption of public trust is and will continue to be a threat to the election process. The changing election landscape, paired with the COVID-19 pandemic, enhances opportunities for the spread of inaccurate process information, unsubstantiated rumors, incomplete or false results, and more. It is imperative that state and local election officials are prepared with the tools to actively communicate timely, trusted, and verified election process details and developments to their constituents to neutralize the potential impacts of such disinformation.

Election Officials are the Trusted Source

By working to build the nation's resilience to election disinformation, we can mitigate its impact on the public's confidence in the 2020 election. Election officials can help citizens avoid contributing to the spread of disinformation by presenting themselves as the preferred source for election information and instilling a spirit of control, empowerment, and personal responsibility within the electorate.

- **Promote election officials as the trusted source of information**
- **Drive voters directly to election officials' websites**
- **Ensure voters are getting accurate election information**
- **Openly communicate plans, procedures, and processes**
- **Do not amplify and spread disinformation**
- **The 2020 election may look and feel different— Encourage voters to be prepared, participate, and be patient**

Public Messaging: Disinformation Stops with You

Election officials can use the strategic messaging below to inform public communications and increase public access, participation, and trust in our election process.

- **Rely on trusted sources.** For election information and polling place health and safety, rely on official election websites and verified social media accounts.

- **Be a prepared, participating, and patient voter.** The 2020 election will look different from those in the past. Have a plan for casting your vote; understand your options, be it voting by mail, in-person early, or on Election Day. Get involved as a pollworker to support the democratic process. Recognize that official results will take longer than in past elections in some states.

- **Think before you link.** Check your sources before sharing content on social media or through email.

- **Be careful what you post.** Be mindful of what you are sharing or posting online—make sure you are not sharing content broadly that you mean only for close family and friends.

- **Be wary of manipulative content.** Watch out for emotionally manipulative content designed to make us angry or sad. Take care when viewing or sharing content that uses sensational terms intended to cause mistrust and division.

FAQs:
STOPPING ELECTION DISINFORMATION

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What are the different types of false information?

- **Misinformation:** Information that is false, but not created or shared with the intention of causing harm.

- **Malinformation:** Information that is based on fact, but used out of context to mislead, harm, or manipulate a person, organization, or country.

- **Disinformation:** False information that is deliberately created to mislead, harm, or manipulate a person, social group, organization, or country.

BEST SOURCES FOR ACCURATE & RELIABLE ELECTION INFORMATION

- State election authority
- State and local official elections websites and social media pages
- Elections Assistance Commission (www.eac.gov)
- Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (www.cisa.gov/protect2020)

Who are the primary malign actors associated with the spreading of election-related disinformation?

Russian, Chinese, and Iranian state-sponsored elements, as well as domestic extremist groups.

What are these malign actors trying to accomplish by spreading disinformation?

Their goal is creating chaos, confusion, and division. They also want to degrade confidence in U.S. institutions and democratic processes, which in turn undermines our ability to effectively carry out an election.

Who else is spreading disinformation?

Scammers, cyber criminals, and con artists are also taking advantage of a lack of understanding of new processes and fears surrounding the election and the voting process.

How is false information spread?

All kinds of false information are spread through a variety of mediums, including mainstream media, social media, word of mouth, online forums, texts, and emails. Some of the most damaging disinformation spreads rapidly via shared posts when people may be unaware of the true source of a link or email.

What can you do to stop the spread of disinformation? We all play a role in stopping the spread of disinformation.

- Rely on trusted sources such as the state and local election authority websites and verified social media. For updates on health and safety, rely on state and local health officials.

- Be a prepared, participating, and patient voter who gets involved, and is knowledgeable of current plans and processes, and how to cast your vote.

- Think twice before sharing content online.

- Be careful about posting personal information. Your identity, photos, or other information could be used to propagate disinformation.

- Be on the lookout for content that seems manipulative or overly emotional. Be especially careful of content that attempts to make people angry or create division.

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