



Counter Disinformation Playbook



Questions We'll Cover

- What is disinformation and why does it matter?
- How can we prepare to counteract disinformation?
- How can my organization respond effectively to disinformation?



Disinformation and Discourse Manipulation

What is disinformation and why does it matter?



The New Information Paradigm

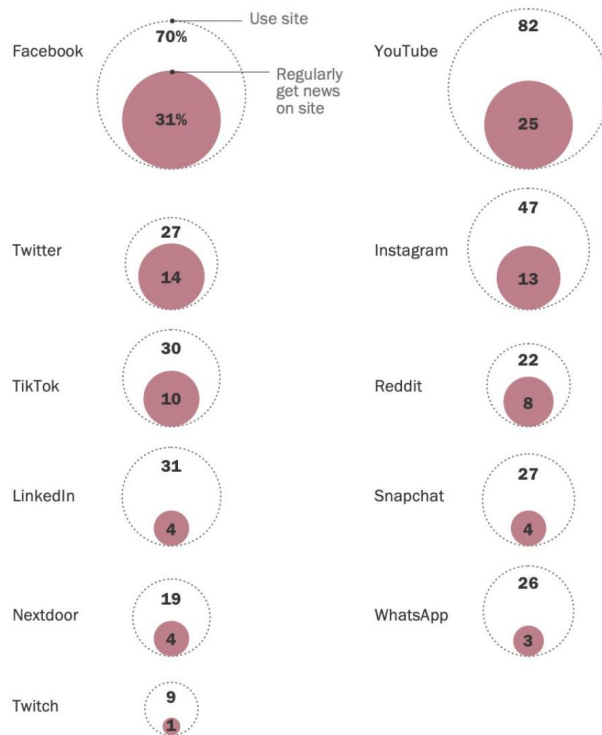
→ Social media has made everyone a potential publisher

→ It has enabled campaigns and supporters to communicate with voters in new ways

→ It has also empowered bad actors who seek to deceive Americans

News consumption and use by social media site

% of U.S. adults who ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 18-Aug. 21, 2022.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



Disinformation

→ “False information which is intended to mislead, especially propaganda issued by a government organization to a rival power or the media.”

Pope Francis Shocks World, Endorses Donald Trump for President, Releases Statement




























TOPICS: Pope Francis Endorses Donald Trump





Platform Manipulation

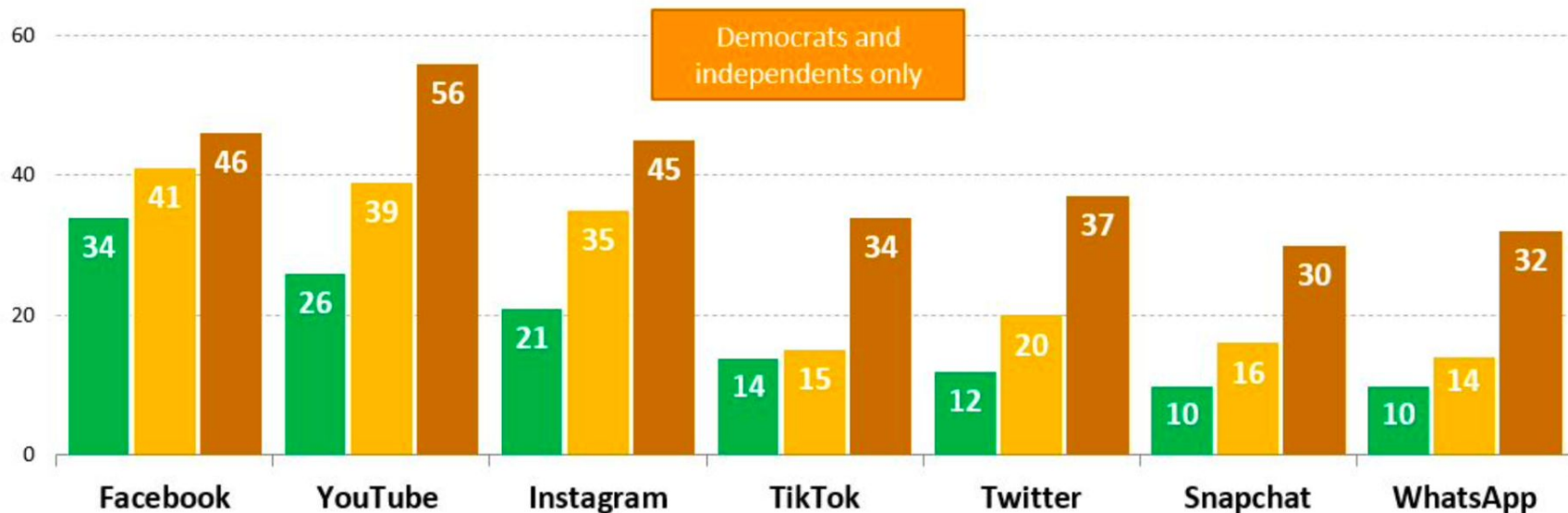
- Cross-channel repetition
- Coordinated sharing/advertising
- Fake accounts or trolls
- Sensationalism and emotions
- In-network sharing/localization

TIMES POSTED		TOTAL INTERACTIONS		TOTAL FOLLOWERS	
43		191,969		13,799,053	
SOURCE (FOLLOWERS)			DATE	INTERACTIONS	LINK
	Ben Shapiro 7,491,289		Apr 6, 2023	53,166	
	Daily Wire 2,527,933		Apr 6, 2023	25,291	
	Andrew Klavan 329,310		Apr 6, 2023	24,228	
	Ben Shapiro 7,492,195		Apr 7, 2023	17,747	
	Matt Walsh 1,345,971		Apr 7, 2023	15,815	
	Ben Shapiro 7,492,195		Apr 7, 2023	15,720	
	Ben Shapiro 7,493,348		Apr 8, 2023	10,027	
	The Angry Patriot 1,005,454		Apr 6, 2023	7,236	
	Daily Wire 2,528,326		Apr 10, 2023	5,600	



Democrats Not Immune from Disinformation

- % among "inoculated" using platform multiple times a day (believe 0 negative narratives)
- % among "partial immunity" group using platform multiple times a day (believe 1-2 narratives)
- % among "vulnerable" using platform multiple times a day (believe 3+ negative narratives)





Voters and Candidates of Color Face Unique Challenges

- Right-wing invests in targeted outreach to these groups while spreading harmful content about them
- Closed-messaging platforms (e.g., WhatsApp, WeChat) difficult to track
- Non-English-language moderation is far worse
- Existing trust gaps to exploit
- Diversity of our base makes it difficult to centrally monitor misinformation



Anticipation & Inoculation

How should I prepare my organization against disinformation?



Democrats.org/disinfo

→ Online portal with counter disinformation recommendations for stakeholders:

- ◆ General Public
- ◆ Campaigns and State Parties
- ◆ Social Media Companies
- ◆ Journalists

Comparative Social Media Policy Analysis

POLICY	FB/INSTA	TWITTER	GOOGLE/YT	SNAP	REDDIT	LINKEDIN	TIKTOK	TWITCH
1. Promote authoritative news over highly engaging news in content algorithms	☆	☆	★	★	★	☆	☆	★
2. Enforce a comprehensive political misinformation policy, with progressively severe penalties for repeat offenders	★	☆	☆	★	★	★	★	★
3. Remove maliciously manipulated media and deepfakes	★	☆	★	★	★	★	★	★
4. Enforce rules on hate and incitement consistently and comprehensively	☆	☆	☆	★	☆	★	☆	☆
5. Establish a policy prohibiting scaled automation	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★
6. Establish a scaled policy enforcing authenticity	★	☆	★	★	☆	★	☆	☆
7. Restrict the distribution of accounts posting plagiarized and unoriginal content	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★
8. Make content algorithms transparent to journalists & academics	☆	☆	★	☆	★	☆	★	☆
9. Make public content and engagement transparent to journalists & academics	★	★	★	★	★	☆	☆	★
10. Make advertising content related to political issues easily accessible and transparent	★	☆	★	★	★	N/A	N/A	N/A
11. Fully disclose state-backed information operation content	★	★	☆	N/A	★	☆	N/A	N/A
12. Label state-controlled media content	★	★	★	☆	★	☆	★	☆
13. End partnerships with state-controlled media	★	★	★	☆	N/A	N/A	N/A	★
14. Establish a policy against the distribution of hacked materials	☆	☆	★	N/A	★	★	☆	★

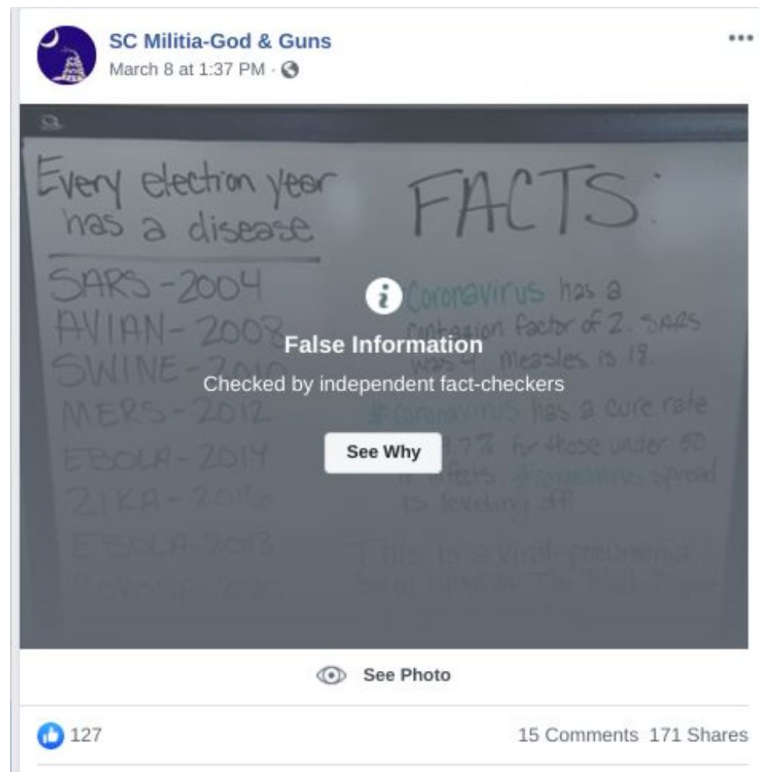




Familiarize yourself with Meta third-party fact checkers

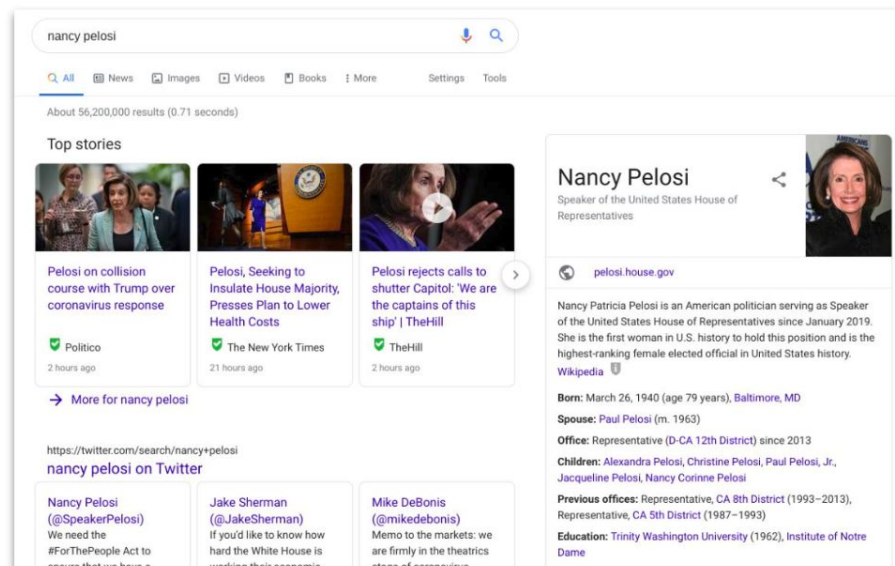
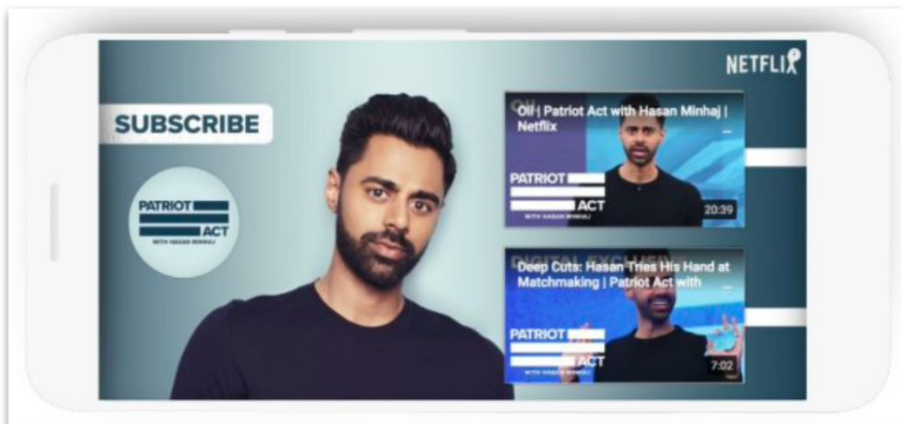
Meta (Facebook) third party fact-checkers:

- AFP - Hub
- Check Your Fact
- Factcheck.org
- Lead Stories
- PolitiFact
- Science Feedback
- Reuters Fact Check
- TelevisaUnivision
- The Associated Press
- The Dispatch
- USA TODAY



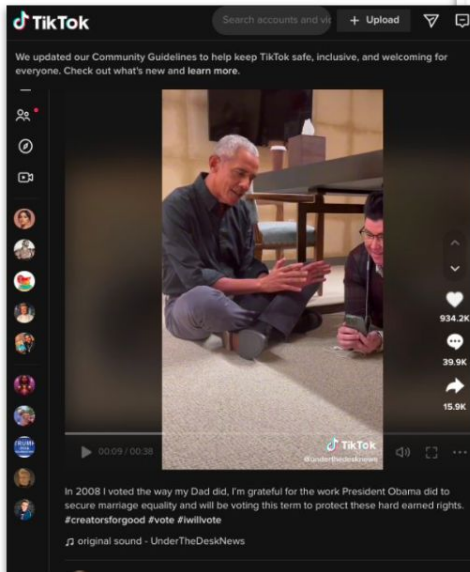


SEO & Social Media Best Practices





Digital Organizing and Surrogates



Katie Porter ✓

@katieporteroc

US House candidate, CA-45

I prefer Elizabeth Warren.



Katie Rogers ✓ @katierogers · Jan 31

Lamar says it - "Whatever you think of his behavior, with the term conservative judges, with fewer regulations, you add in there and with the president of Ukraine, and you decide if you prefer him or Warren." nyti.ms/36MVNWX ✓

8:10 PM · Jan 31, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

992 Retweets 9.3K Likes



Matt Nowling (Text CDA to 43367) @MatthewNowling · Mar 19

I just got off a digital organizing training with @TheDemocrats. Now more than ever #DigitalIsOrganizing! Did you miss the first session? There are a few more sessions coming soon, sign up here:



**DIGITAL ORGANIZING
101**

Digital Organizing 101 Training · The Democrats

Sign up to learn more about ways to keep organizing from the comfort of your home with some digital organizing 101 skills! We'll cover the basic...
events.democrats.org



Know your online turf

- Organizers should be treating their local online turf as equally important to their offline turf
- Knowing your online turf means knowing what pages, groups, local online news, influencers, and hashtags matter for your online landscape
- By having a baseline for your local online landscape, organizers will be better equipped to spot and stop disinformation.



Be Alert for Potential Infiltration

- Stay calm, but be vigilant.
- Bad actors may mislead you about their identity and goals.
 - ◆ Vet early and often (without creating a culture of paranoia).
 - ◆ Be thoughtful about word choice.
 - ◆ Trust your gut.



Develop an Incident Response Plan

EXAMPLE: DISINFO RAPID RESPONSE FRAMEWORK

Likelihood of disinformation, misinformation, malign content, bad actors targeting campaign*

		High	Medium	Low
Likelihood we are losing votes or will lose votes *	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Platform takedown request Change the subject Attack/expose messenger Outreach to voters/stakeholders Press statement or earned media play Run paid campaign Deploy digital organizers or field Response from allies Media coverage Monitor for topic momentum Send incident to disinfo@dnc.org 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Platform takedown request Rapid response/Change the subject Damage control with journalists/donors Arm organizers with talking points and inoculation messages Consider targeted response to impacted communities Explore takedown options Monitor for escalation/suspect features Send incident to disinfo@dnc.org 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Platform takedown request Rapid response/change the subject Monitor for suspect features Outreach to experts/allies to ask them to explore further attribution and take down options; pursue platform pressure Send incident to disinfo@dnc.org
	Med	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Platform takedown request Determine strategy on messenger Consider content campaign options Arm organizers with talking points and inoculation messages Consider reaching out to the press Consider engaging allies Put field leads on alert Send incident to disinfo@dnc.org 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flag for experts/ send incident Arm organizers with talking points and/or inoculation messages if needed Get handle on press/opinion elite if needed Check in with regional/target influencers Monitor for escalation Put field leads on alert 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flag for experts/send incident Monitor for escalation Do nothing
	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send incident to disinfo@dnc.org Flag for issue experts, policy experts Request outreach to affected communities for awareness ONLY if appropriate/time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flag for experts/send incident to disinfo@dnc.org Do nothing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do nothing



Responding to Digital Disinformation

How can my organization
respond effectively to
disinformation?



Terms of Service Violations



Impersonation/Copyright Infringement



Fox News Channel @FoxNewsChanUS · Jan 3

JUST IN:

Congresswoman Ilhan Omar tweets she's "ashamed to be called an American" and pleads other nations to 'stop Trump' with 'violence' Friday afternoon.

Tune into Fox News for breaking details.



Ilhan Omar ✓

@IlhanMN

Follow

There is no way to overstate how ASHAMED I am to be called an 'American.' We need every world leader to rise up and demand that someone stops Trump from starting a catastrophic war with Iran.
THE TIME FOR VIOLENCE IS NOW!
[#NoWarWithIran](#)

2.2K

1.7K

1.4K



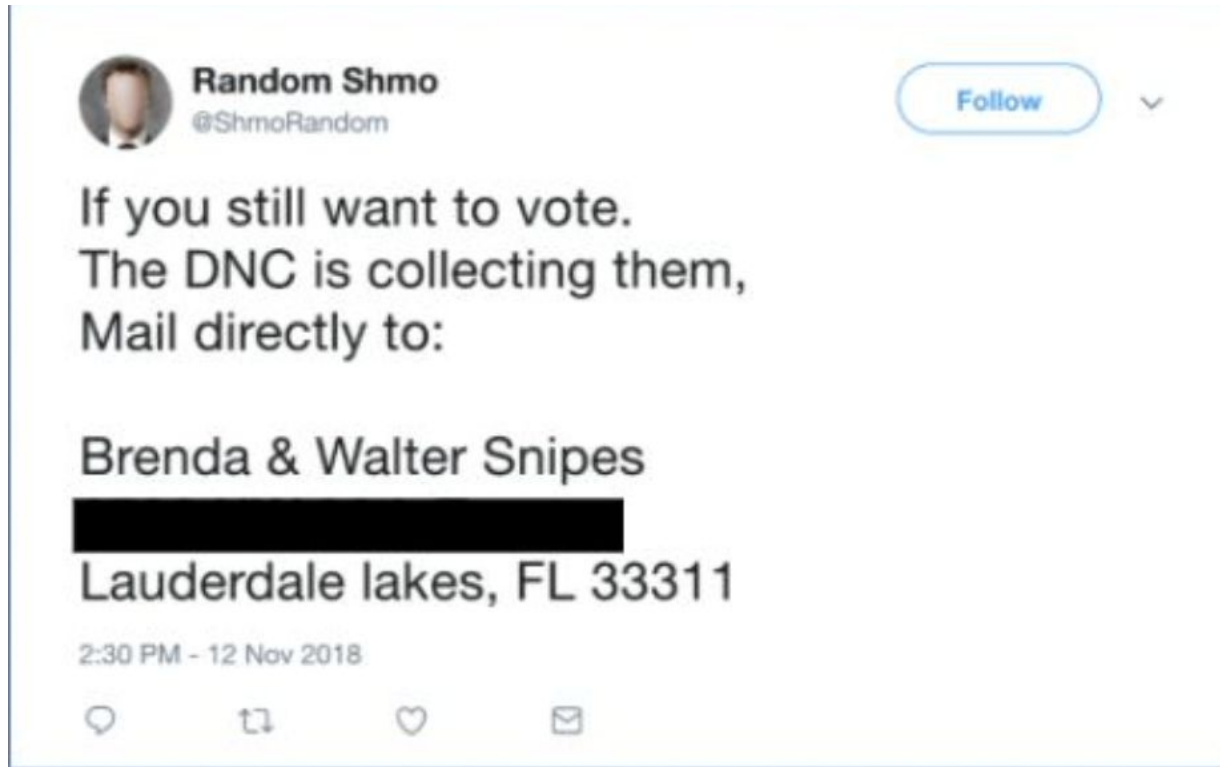


Harassment, Hate Speech, & Calls to Violence (abusive behavior)



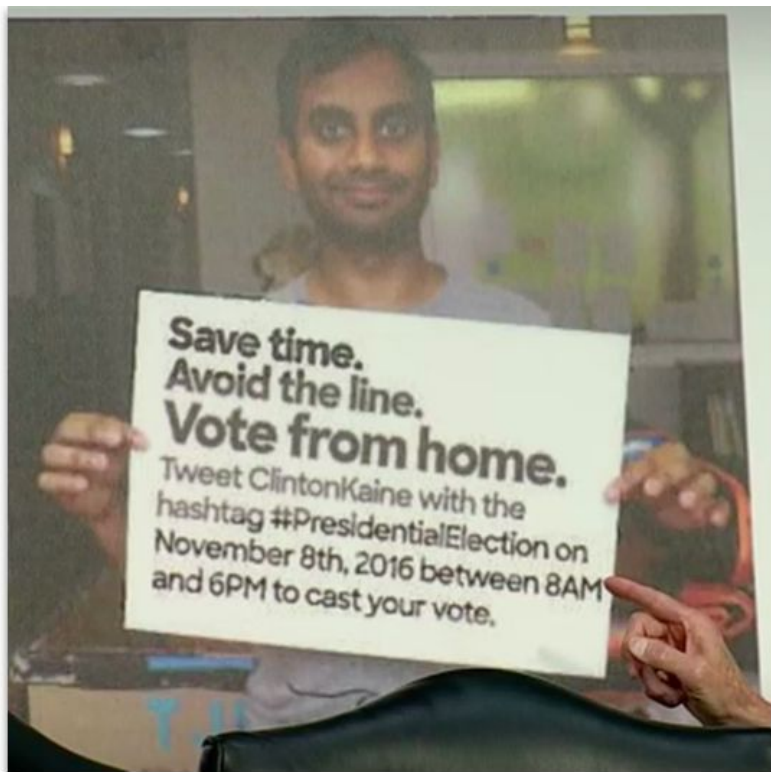


Doxxing





Voting Disinformation and Misinformation




Username
@handle

BLUE WAVE SMS

text "BLUEWAVE"
to 55463 on election
day and VOTE
from the COMFORT
of your home.*

- . VOTE EASY
- . VOTE FAST
- . VOTE TODAY

 **PROGRESSIVE
TURNOUT PROJECT**
*Service only available for Democrats

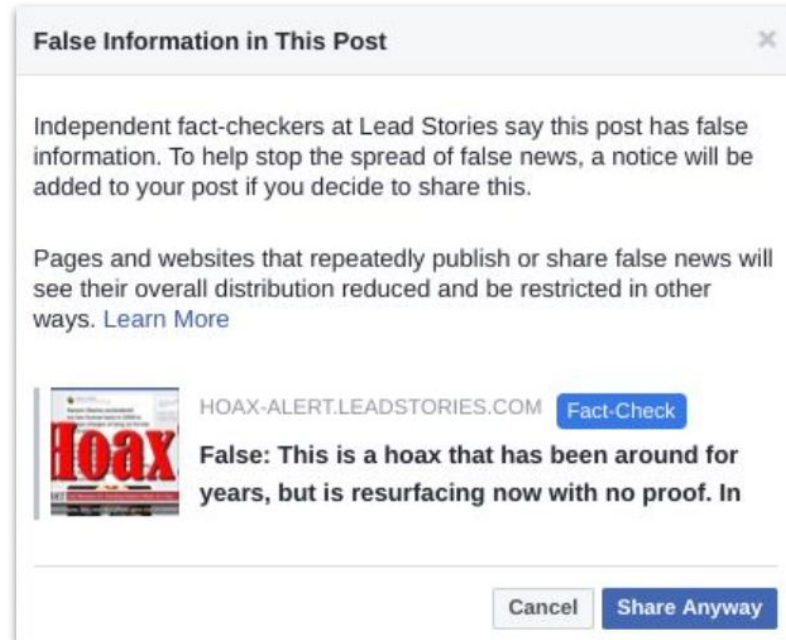
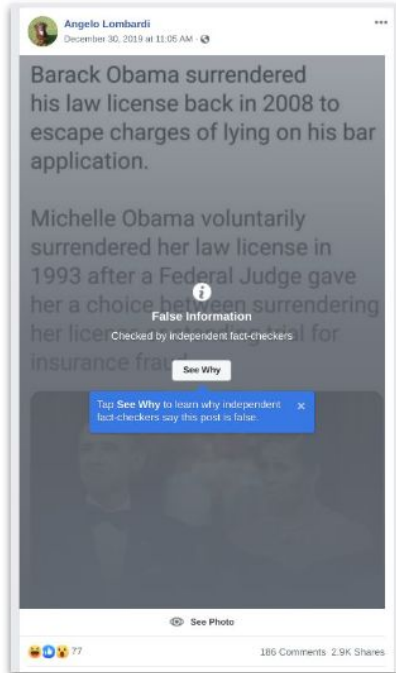
AS FEATURED IN

The Boston Globe **CNN** **abc** **NBC** **FOX NEWS** **CBS NEWS** The Miami Herald

🗨️ ↺️ ❤️ ✉️



Political Disinformation and False News





Deepfakes and Manipulated Media



This image looks realistic, but take a closer look at Trump's right arm and neck



**Correcting the
record**



Is the Risk of Amplification Worth It? Usually no.

REACH = Are real people seeing it, or is it stuck in partisan spaces?

IMPACT = Will it change the offline situation: turnout, reputation, support?



Other questions to ask

- Time horizon? Immediate vs. long-term impact
- Who are the actors? GOP, far-right, foreign, conspiracy theorists, etc.
- Types of accounts? Bots, fake news, trolls, deep fakes, etc.
- Type of disinfo? True, false, out-of-context, character attacks
- Platform violations? Behavior vs. content
- Impact? Effective vs. attempted



Counter Indirectly with a Positive Counterweight

Democrats have no plan to help working people or plan to counter inflation



Organize local influencers and supporters to uplift the direct impacts of recent legislation (e.g., IRA, CHIPS, Infrastructure)

The Left supports abortion up until the time of birth



Activate allies to reinforce accurate information and draw contrasts with extreme right-wing positions on choice

Democratic efforts to defund police have skyrocketed crime under Biden



Democrats under Biden have funded police—*without any GOP support*—and fought to make our communities safer (i.e., Safer America Plan, ARP funding)

Leftist border policies have left our country wide open, and they don't even want illegals in their towns



Democrats support comprehensive reform to make our system more secure and humane while the GOP is trafficking human beings around like political pawns to score points



The Truth Sandwich

1. Start with the truth. The first frame gets the advantage.

2. Indicate the lie. Avoid amplifying the lie if possible.

3. Return to the truth. Always repeat truths more than lies.

1. Donald Trump disbanded the US pandemic response team in 2018.

2. Under fire over COVID deaths, Trump is trying to shift blame to others, like President Obama.

3. All evidence suggests Trump is responsible for the botched response.



Best Practices to Keep in Mind

- Don't take the bait.
- Address underlying concerns and pivot to a proactive message.
- Avoid arguments and confrontation; you may deepen their belief.
- Keep the focus on the voters.
- Undermine the motives of the messengers.



Response Tactics



Donald J. Trump

Sponsored • Paid for by Donald J. Trump for President, Inc.

Joe Biden PROMISED Ukraine \$1 BILLION DOLLARS if they fired the prosecutor investigating his son's company.

BUT when President Trump asks Ukraine to investigate CORRUPTION, Democrats want to IMPEACH HIM! DEMOCRATS ARE CORRUPT!



WWW.DONALDJTRUMP.COM/
DEMOCRATS WANT TO STEAL THE ELECTION
WATCH NOW >>>



The Daily Caller

May 20, 2020 · 🌐

Quid Pro Joe? 🤔



DAILYCALLER.COM

Leaked Tapes Reportedly Show Biden Pressuring Ukrainian President To Fire Prosecutor In Return For \$1 Billion

👍👎👁️ 24K

4K Comments 15K Shares

 **TrendingPolitics™**

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Home > BREAKING: Ukrainian judge orders...

BREAKING: Ukrainian judge orders Joe Biden to be listed as an alleged criminal in firing of state prosecutor

VP BIDEN

THREATENED TO WITHHOLD
1 BILLION DOLLARS
FROM UKRAINE TO SAVE
HIS SON'S JOB



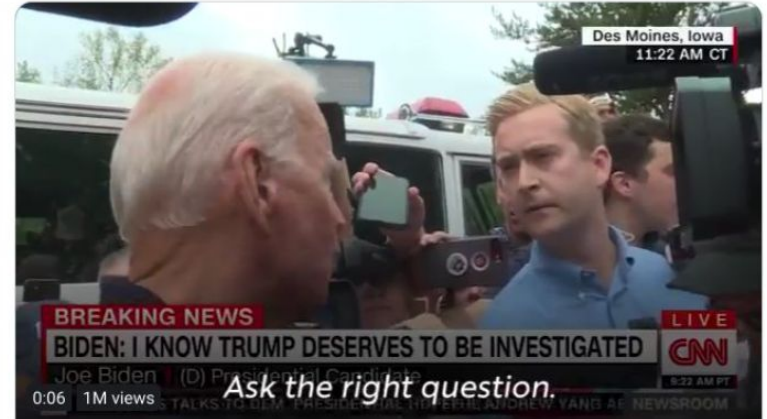
Indirect Response with Counter-Messaging



Joe Biden (Text Join to 30330) ✓
@JoeBiden

Eight. That's how many times Donald Trump asked a foreign leader to investigate me and my family.

Why? Because he knows I'll beat him like a drum.



Donald Trump Knows Joe Biden Will Beat Him Like a Drum

2:00 PM · Sep 21, 2019 · [Twitter Media Studio](#)

11.7K Retweets 61.2K Likes



DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF ILLINOIS



Stephanie Hamill
@STEPMHAMILL

...

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and fellow Democrats search high and low for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell ... They couldn't find him.. WHY?

Because they went to the wrong office ... WRECKED! 🤔🤔🤔🤔



11:00 AM · Jan 17, 2019 · Twitter Web Client

3,815 Retweets 1,713 Quote Tweets 12K Likes

Direct Response with Counter-Messaging



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez @AOC · Jan 17, 2019

As I say *in the clip you posted* we WENT to the majority leader's office - he was absent.

So we decided to drop letters off at almost every place he could run (including the GOP break room).

At what point is @FoxNews obligated to not lie?

And more importantly, #WheresMitch?



Stephanie Hamill @STEPMHAMILL · Jan 17, 2019

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and fellow Democrats search high and low for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell ...

They couldn't find him..

WHY?

Because they went to the wrong office ... WRECKED! 🤔🤔🤔🤔



5.1K

16.7K

80.9K



DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF ILLINOIS



United States trends



1 · Trending

#CNNisTrash

57.8K Tweets



George Galloway, Plain Ol' Johnny Graz, and 1 more are Tweeting about this

2 · Trending

#NeverWarren

13.3K Tweets



OWS_ellie 30 🗨️ #ITrustBernie TURN OFF YOUR TV! is Tweeting about this

3 · Trending

#WarrenIsASnake

5,543 Tweets



pmcall 🌹 ⏳ 🕯️ ⚖️, Plain Ol' Johnny Graz, and 3 more are Tweeting about this



Ben Collins ✓

@oneunderscore__



FASCINATING data here about [#NeverWarren](#), the No. 1 trend in the United States right now.

The top three tweets about the hashtag in the world—from [@johnpavlovitz](#), [@mehdirhasan](#), [@deetwocents](#)—all denounce people using it.

The algorithm is generating an opposite reality.



DanielleMoodie-Mills ✓ @D

Anyone using [#NeverWarren](#) not and has not been effected shouldn't be saying "NEVER" together. [#WokeAF](#)

203

357



Mehdi Hasan ✓ @mehdirhasan · 25m

Yep, let's be clear: if you're tweeting in support of this ludicrous [#NeverWarren](#) hashtag, you're not only dumb but you're also telling the that you're ok with kids in cages and bans on Muslims.



DanielleMoodie-Mills ✓ @DeeTwoCents · 1h

Anyone using [#NeverWarren](#) is clearly overcome with white privilege: is not and has not been effected by this monstrous administration. We shouldn't be saying "NEVER" about anyone EXCEPT #Trump. Get your together. [#WokeAF](#)

183

228

1.3K



Show this thread



John Pavlovitz ✓ @johnpavlovitz · 2h

Anyone posting [#NeverWarren](#) gets blocked immediat

That kind of nonsense tells me that you're really only c candidate winning—which is how we got Trump. We've before.

We're trying to remove a historically malignant despot.

Do better

573

1.3K

6.7K

10:46 AM · Jan 15, 2020



5.4K



272



Share this Tweet



Deploy Digital Surrogates



Sarah Silverman 

@SarahKSilverman



The aggressively stupid and totally fringe NeverWarren hashtag is trending because of the people who are pointing out that it's stupid. Don't let a few dummies ruin Bernie or Warren for y'all. They are both stellar leaders and humans.

1:15 PM · Jan 15, 2020 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

5.1K Retweets **51.5K** Likes




Team Trump
Sponsored - Paid for by TRUMP MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN COMMITTEE

Joe's BEGGING for breaks during the debate!

CHECK JOE'S EARS!

He REFUSED drug test & DECLINED an earpiece inspection!
Donate to TRUMP



STOP SLEEPY JOE

WHY WON'T SLEEPY JOE COMMIT TO AN EAR PIECE INSPECTION?

John Whitehouse+ 
@existentialfish

Fox News chief political anchor gives credence to Trump conspiracy theory Biden will have a secret listening device: "As far as the listening devices and the Biden campaign's response to that, I think that's interesting. We're going to have to follow that through the day."



10:30 AM · Sep 29, 2020

175 Retweets 432 Quotes 523 Likes 16 Bookmarks

Mockery





Conclusion- what we can do now

- Optimize your organic digital presence and digital organization**
- Draft an incident response matrix**
- Introduce yourself to social media reps. and fact-checkers**



QUESTIONS?

DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF ILLINOIS

www.ildems.com | [@illinoisdems](https://twitter.com/illinoisdems)