
ELECTION SEASON TOOLKIT

Spot the Misinformation

Six checks before you hit share. A false claim travels fast. A verified one is worth the wait.

01 Before You Share, Stop and Check

- ✓ Who's the original source: an official election office, a credible outlet, or an anonymous account?
- ✓ Does the post link to anything you can verify, or does it just assert?
- ✓ Is this dated for this election, or could it be recycled from a past cycle?
- ✓ Would a claim this big be reported by more than one credible outlet?
- ✓ Does the headline actually match what the article says?

02 Common Red Flags

- ✓ Language built to provoke anger or fear before you've had time to think.
- ✓ A screenshot with no link to where it actually came from.
- ✓ A “leaked” or “secret” report you have no way to verify.
- ✓ Urgent pressure to “share before it's deleted” or “before they take it down.”
- ✓ Numbers or statistics with no source attached.
- ✓ A brand-new account with almost no history, suddenly going viral.

03 Where to Verify Election Claims

- ✓ Your state or county election office website: look for .gov.
- ✓ Established, nonpartisan fact-checking organizations, such as [AP Fact Check](#), [Reuters Fact Check](#), or [FactCheck.org](#).
- ✓ Multiple outlets across the political spectrum reporting the same thing.
- ✓ The official social media accounts of your local election officials.
- ✓ A campaign's own statement, but only for claims about that campaign itself.

04 Know the Difference

- ✓ Misinformation. False info shared by someone who believes it's true.
- ✓ Disinformation. False info shared deliberately to mislead.
- ✓ A rumor isn't a fact until it's confirmed by an official source.
- ✓ Satire is meant to be obviously exaggerated, not taken literally.
- ✓ An opinion piece is analysis, not a factual report. Check which one you're reading.

05 If You're Not Sure

- ✓ Don't share it yet. Waiting costs you nothing; spreading a false claim does.
- ✓ Ask yourself: what would it take to change my mind if this turned out to be false?
- ✓ Check whether your election office has already addressed the claim directly.
- ✓ Already shared it and it turned out false? Correcting it publicly helps stop the spread.

06 Patterns Behind Common Election Myths

Election disinformation often preys on normal parts of the process that can look suspicious if you don't know the rules going in. Here's what's actually routine:

- ✓ “Widespread fraud” claims rarely come with named, verifiable specifics.
- ✓ Slower results are normal. Close races and mail ballots take longer to count accurately. The National Conference of State Legislatures has a plain-language [explainer of the canvass and certification process](#) that follows every election.
- ✓ Certification is a routine legal step, not a controversial one. Every state formally finalizes its count through a set process, usually within days to weeks of Election Day. NCSL tracks [certification deadlines and requirements](#) for every state.
- ✓ Mail ballot deadlines vary by state. Some states count ballots that are postmarked by Election Day even if they arrive afterward. That's normal procedure, not a loophole.
- ✓ Poll watchers and observers are a normal, legal part of the process, not evidence something's wrong.
- ✓ A single error, one machine glitch or one miscount, gets caught and corrected by standard procedure. It isn't proof of a systemic problem.
- ✓ Every county runs a little differently. Look up your own county's specific process and timeline through [CanIVote.org](#) so you know what's normal before Election Day.

Not sure if something you heard about your local election is true?

866-OUR-VOTE

Trained, nonpartisan volunteers can help you check claims about registration, polling places, ballots, and more. Get help before you share, not just after something's gone wrong.

Additional resources: [AP Fact Check](#), [Reuters Fact Check](#), and [FactCheck.org](#) (for checking specific claims) · [National Conference of State Legislatures](#) (for how elections are actually run, canvassed, and certified)

Fact-checking sources and standards evolve. When in doubt, go to your state or county election office directly rather than relying on any single secondhand source, including this one.

Slow down. Check twice. Share once.