

Inoculating Persuadable Voters Against Election Disinformation

A messaging toolkit for partners

Disinformation about our elections is being created and spread in new, unprecedented ways — from the White House to state and county boards of elections to the ever-changing AI-powered media landscape. In response, Voting Rights Lab spent months talking with voters and testing messages to learn what actually beats back disinformation and builds confidence in elections.

We focused on audiences who are both vulnerable to election disinformation and persuadable: **Independents, moderate Republicans, and low-engagement voters.** However, the winning narratives from this research resonate with voters across all demographics and political affiliations — giving us a unique communications opportunity to build a big tent in support of free and fair elections.

Importantly, this is nonpartisan educational research intended for 501(c)(3)-compliant purposes only. It is not to be used for any partisan, political, or electioneering activities by any organization. For questions about this message guidance, please email jay.riestenberg@votingrightslab.org.

Election Messaging Do's and Don'ts

DO	DON'T
Talk about verified elections and checks and balances. <i>Let's monitor the checks and balances. Audits, recounts, bipartisan oversight, courts, and certification processes investigate concerns and verify the facts.</i>	Don't just say "trust the system." On its own, that doesn't land.
Validate people's impulse to ask questions. <i>Being informed today means more than believing everything you see. It means slowing down and verifying what we hear from multiple sources. We don't let politicians do our thinking for us.</i> <i>At election time, allegations of fraud can spread quickly. When these concerns arise, we should ask</i>	Don't automatically dismiss questions about how our elections work or election integrity as disinformation.

questions. *Examine concerns carefully. Wait for proof before assuming the worst.*

Keep your tone calm and respectful.

Let's not allow politicians or anyone else to turn Americans against each other. Let's choose respect over hostility. Proof over accusations. People over politics. Country over party.

Don't panic, overreact, or get too emotional. Don't play into politicians' vindictiveness, name-calling, and attacks. Avoid partisan-sounding language.

Focus on fairness and following the rules.

Local election leaders ensure all rules are properly followed throughout the election process.

Don't use messaging that focuses on "defending democracy." Instead, focus on "free and fair elections."

Work with local news when you can — they still get the most viewership and trust.

With national sources, cite multiple sources that report consistent, accurate results.

Don't assume voters read and trust the same news sources as you. There is deep distrust in the media, especially national sources.

Know your audience. Tailor your message and your messenger to your audience.

Election officials and workers, local politicians, neighbors with firsthand experience working at polling stations, and bipartisan validators carry credibility across all audiences.

Don't use the same message for every audience.

Independents and traditional Republicans want process and evidence, not reassurance. Lower-engagement voters respond best to simple, personal messages grounded in shared values.

Words, Phrases, and Messaging Frames That Resonate

Use the following words and phrases in your communications, which tested best across our interviews and national survey:

- "Checks and balances" — reminds people the system has real safeguards to prevent election fraud.
- "Wait for evidence"/"wait for proof" — gives people permission to pause instead of assuming what they hear is true.
- "Facts over feelings"/"stick to the facts" — signals a calm, non-emotional response to fraud claims.
- "Proof over accusations" — a clear way to say "show me the evidence" without sounding dismissive.
- "Fair elections where rules are followed" — grounds the conversation in fairness and rule-following, rather than the partisan-coded "defending democracy."
- "Unity over division," "Country over party" — shifts the conversation away from partisan triggers towards patriotic duty.

Voting Rights Lab is a nonpartisan, 501(c)(3) nonprofit, state-focused organization with a national perspective. Our comprehensive election policy analysis, research, and data provide uniquely actionable insights to our partners and the public.