

# Building Healthy Information Ecosystems

## Election Officials' Communications During the 2024 Election Cycle

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- 1 Background & Motivation for Research
- 2 From Theory to Measurement
- 3 Key Findings & Next Steps

# 1 Background & Motivation for Research

## 2 From Theory to Measurement

## 3 Key Findings & Next Steps

# Background

- Motivation for research:
  - Complex infrastructure of elections.
  - Variation in policy and administration.
  - Variation in voter experiences.
- Substantive questions:
  - Election policy design & impact on election administration.
  - Election administration & impact on costs of voting.
  - Resilient electorate & election infrastructure.

## Research Question

### **Do Election Officials' communications improve the quality of democratic listening?**

- Information disorder has left voters vulnerable to misinformation.
- Observable impacts on democratic listening:
  - Declining confidence in election integrity.
  - Persistence of election denial.
  - Increase in harassment/threats towards election officials & staff.

# The Role of Election Officials (EOs) in Building Healthy Info Ecosystems

## Election Officials as central actors in the election information ecosystem:

- They know the election *process*.
- They are committed to running *safe, secure, and free* elections.
- They are the *authoritative source* for reliable and accurate information.
- They are the key *point of contact* for the public.
- Voter education & outreach is a core part of their work.

# Theoretical foundation

## A systemic approach to deliberative democracy:

- In the election system, Election Officials are established process "experts."
- Their communication & outreach efforts have *educative effects*, helping voters complete processes successfully (Merivaki & Suttman-Lea 2023).
- Their *trust-building* efforts build confidence in election integrity (Merivaki, Suttman-Lea & Orey 2025).
- *Positive attitudes* towards election administration can be understood as evidence of democratic listening ( Suttman-Lea, Merivaki & Orey 2025).

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# How can we measure "Voter Education"?

## **Social media is a useful starting point.**

- Least invasive way to systematically observe voter comms & outreach:
  - First, map the digital footprint of EOs.
  - Then, observe information-sharing patterns.
  - Then, identify message delivery strategies.
  - And then, assess the effectiveness on the voter experience.

# How can we measure "Voter Education"?

## The Election Officials Communications Tracker.

- Goal: Understand *how* EOs combat misinfo & build trust in election integrity.
- How: Tracking and analyzing social media comms by EOs during the election cycle.
- Public-facing outputs:
  - Dynamic dataset of voter communications.
  - Data analytics for EOs.
  - Communications toolkits for EOs & stakeholders.
  - Public-facing dashboard.

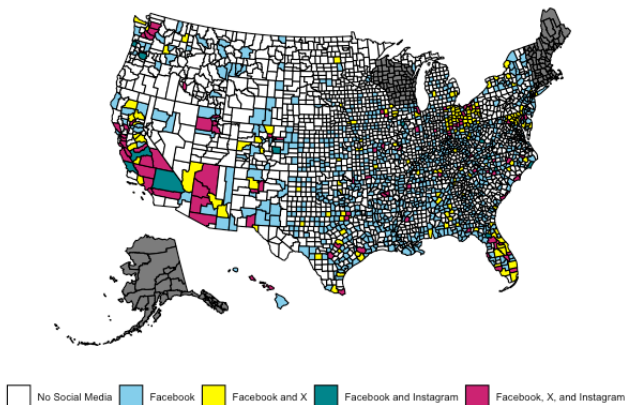
# How can we measure "Voter Education"?

## Setting up the data collection - Key considerations:

- Database of state and local election officials.
  - 50 + 1 State Chief Election Officials.
  - 6,000+ local election officials (single/shared positions).
- Database of state and local election officials' social media accounts.
- Content classification strategy.

# The Election Officials Communications Tracker

## Mapping the presence of local EOs.



# The Election Officials Communications Tracker

## Project Partner: ATl.io of the National Conference on Citizenship.



About Us + Projects + News

# Junkipedia

Junkipedia is a social listening platform that enables users to identify, track, and analyze civic discourse across the internet. From mainstream platforms like Facebook and TikTok – to alt tech platforms like TruthSocial and Telegram – online platforms have become critical channels for both official communications and everyday community conversations.

Junkipedia users from academia, journalism, and civil society utilize the platform for real-time, cross-platform monitoring of social media, podcasts, and Substack to better inform their understanding of our digital civic discourse.

To learn more and apply for access, visit [junkipedia.org](https://junkipedia.org)

# The Election Officials Communications Tracker

## What can we do in Junkipedia?

- Create actor sets ("US Election Officials").
- Upload actor set social media accounts.
- Build custom tracking & analysis project ("2024 EO Comms Tracker").
  - Build in-platform labeling codebook.
  - Manually label content.
  - Export raw data & metadata.
  - Create custom dashboards.

## EOs Database

Data Automations Interfaces Forms

Launch

Counties +

3 hidden fields Filtered by Accounts Group IT Sort Color Share and sync


Name	County	Coun...	County FIPS - NEW	State Full	Review...	Office/s managing...	Unit Title	other_con
Probate Judge, Autauga County, AL	AUTAUGA COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Probate Judge	Probate Judge	
Probate Judge, Baldwin County, AL	BALDWIN COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Probate Judge	Probate Judge	
Probate Judge, Bibb County, AL	BIBB COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Circuit Clerk	Probate Judge	
Clerk of Circuit Court, Bibb County, AL	BIBB COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Circuit Clerk	Clerk of Circuit Court	
Clerk of Circuit Court, Blount County, AL	BLOUNT COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Circuit Clerk	Clerk of Circuit Court	
Clerk of Circuit Court, Calhoun County, AL	CALHOUN COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Circuit Clerk	Clerk of Circuit Court	
Clerk of Circuit Court, Cherokee County, AL	CHEROKEE COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Circuit Clerk	Clerk of Circuit Court	
Probate Judge, Chilton County, AL	CHILTON COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Circuit Clerk	Probate Judge	
Probate Judge, Clarke County, AL	CLARKE COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Probate Judge	Probate Judge	
Clerk of Circuit Court, Clay County, AL	CLAY COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Probate Judge	Clerk of Circuit Court	
County Commission, Cleburne County, AL	CLEBURNE COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Probate Judge	County Commission	
County Commission, Colbert County, AL	COLBERT COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Probate Judge	County Commission	
Probate Judge, Conecuh County, AL	CONECUH COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Probate Judge	Probate Judge	
Probate Judge, Coosa County, AL	COOSA COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Probate Judge	Probate Judge	
Probate Judge, Covington County, AL	COVINGTON COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Probate Judge	Probate Judge	
County Commission, Cullman County, AL	CULLMAN COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Probate Judge	County Commission	
County Commission, Dale County, AL	DALE COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Probate Judge	County Commission	
Probate Judge, DeKalb County, AL	DEKALB COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Probate Judge	Probate Judge	
Clerk of Circuit Court, Elmore County, AL	ELMORE COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Circuit Clerk	Clerk of Circuit Court	
Probate Judge, Escambia County, AL	ESCAMBIA COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Probate Judge	Probate Judge	
Probate Judge, Henry County, AL	HENRY COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Probate Judge	Probate Judge	
Probate Judge, Houston County, AL	HOUSTON COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Probate Judge	Probate Judge	
Clerk of Circuit Court, Jefferson County, AL	JEFFERSON COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Probate Judge	Clerk of Circuit Court	
Probate Judge, Lamar County, AL	LAMAR COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Probate Judge	Probate Judge	
Clerk of Circuit Court, Lamar County, AL	LAMAR COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Circuit Clerk	Clerk of Circuit Court	
County Commission, Lawrence County, AL	LAWRENCE COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Probate Judge	County Commission	
Clerk of Circuit Court, Lawrence County, AL	LAWRENCE COUNTY			ALABAMA	Y	Circuit Clerk	Clerk of Circuit Court	

# The Tracker in Practice: Labeling Content

The screenshot displays the Junkipedia web application interface. On the left is a sidebar with navigation options: Monitoring, Channels, Lists, Issues, Narratives, Actor Sets, Search Terms, Saved Searches, and Modules. The main content area shows a post from the 'Surry County Board of Elections' with the title 'There's Still Time to Vote Early in North Carolina!'. The post includes a date filter (2024-08-28 06:00 - 2024-11-15 19:30), a search bar, and various filtering options like 'Post Details', 'Languages', 'Engagement', 'NSFW?', 'Post Lists', 'Labels', 'Actors', 'Channels', 'Exclude Channels', and 'Search Terms'. The post itself features a purple graphic with the text 'There's Still Time to Vote Early in North Carolina!' and a link to 'vot.ncarb.us'. To the right of the post is a vertical list of labeling options, including 'TYPE: How to', 'Non-election related', 'Bookmark', 'TYPE: EO in the News', 'TYPE: Media', 'TYPE: Press release', 'TYPE: Election deadline', 'TYPE: Outreach', 'DELIVERY', 'VISUALS', 'ACCESS: Multilingual', 'ACCESS: Hashtags', 'ACCESS: Links', 'Campaigns', 'FLAG: Mainframe', 'TRUST-BUILDING', 'PROCEDURES: Ongoing', 'PROCEDURES: Pre-election', 'PROCEDURES: Post-Election', 'THEME: Voter Registration', 'THEME: Voting Methods', 'THEME: Election ready', 'GOTV', and 'Add notes'. At the bottom right, there is a 'Save' button.




# The Tracker in Practice: Labeling Content

 **Flagler County Supervisor of Elections** ...  
1.2K Followers  
on Sep 25

Mail ballots were scheduled to be mailed Thursday, September 26. Due to Hurricane Helene, our mail date has been changed to Friday, September 27. In the meantime, please view your Sample Ballot and start reading the six statewide proposed Constitutional Amendments on the ballot. More information: <https://www.flaglerelections.gov/Election-Info/2024-General-Election-Follow-Flagler-County-Emergency-Management-for-local-updates-and-be-safe/>

[see less](#)



**Hurricane Helene**  
Windward September 25, 2024  
10 AM CDT Advisory 9  
NWS National Hurricane Center

**Current information:** X  
Center location 21.6 N 86.3 W  
Maximum sustained wind 80 mph  
Movement NNW at 10 mph


**Forecast positions:**  
● Tropical Cyclone ○ Potential TC  
Sustained winds: 12 - 30 mph  
S 30-70 mph; N 74-110 mph; SE 110 mph

**Potential track area:** Day 1-5  
Day 4-5

**Watches:** Hurricane Tropical Storm  
**Warnings:** Hurricane Tropical Storm  
**Current wind field estimate:** Hurricane Tropical Storm

🔗 53 Shares 0 Comments

Ballot initiatives Clickable Emergency response  
Sample ballot TYPE: How to Original Non-human imagery  
Information image Logo DELIVERY VISUALS  
ACCESS: Link/s THEME: Election ready

 **Illinois State Board of Elections** ...  
8.1K Followers  
on Sep 23

Your vote is your secret! The confidentiality of your selections is protected, even from election officials. This fundamental principle of democracy ensures that your choices remain private while still allowing for transparency in voter participation. 🗳️  
#ElectionIntegrity #YourVoteMatters

[see less](#)

**CAN SOMEONE TELL WHO I VOTED FOR?**

Your voting choices remain confidential, and even election officials cannot determine your selections. Secret ballots are fundamental to democracy and are protected across all 50 states. While your specific choices are private, there is accessible voter data that indicates which elections you've participated in and the party ballot you selected during primaries.

**ELECTIONS.IL.GOV**

🔗 0 Comments

🔗 00 Shares 0 Comments

Trust the process How to - procedures Information image  
Logo Office logo URL/Unclinkable TYPE: How to Repost  
Non-human imagery DELIVERY VISUALS  
ACCESS: Multilingual ACCESS: Link/s TRUST-BUILDING

# The Tracker in Practice: Social Media Activity Over Time

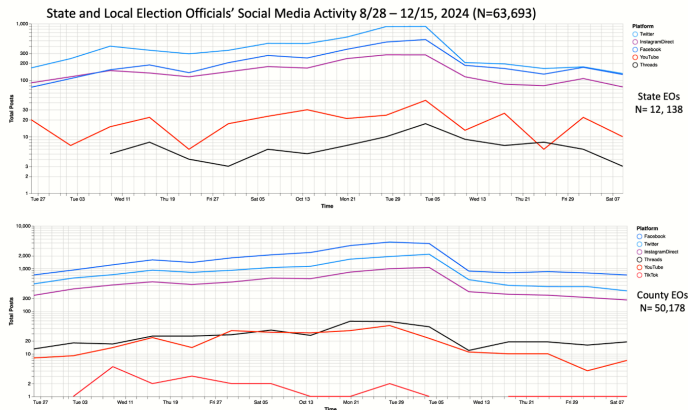
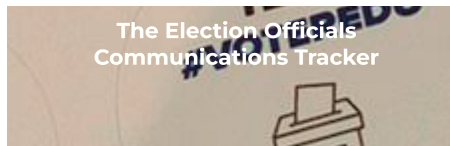


Figure 4: Election officials' social media activity over time

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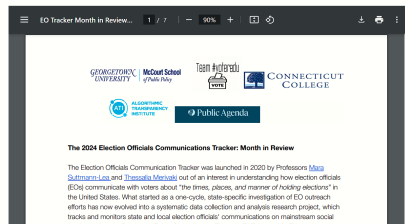
# What do we do with the data?



In this project, we track and monitor state and local election officials' communications on social media - Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, Threads, TikTok, and YouTube. We replicate our efforts from the 2022 election cycle (see our report [here](#)), and share summaries of communication efforts during the 2024 election cycle.

We thank the MIT Election Data Science Lab for funding this project during the 2022 cycle, *Public Agenda* for supporting our work during the 2024 cycle, and the Algorithmic Transparency Institute (ATI) for providing us with platform support.

October 4, 2024: Month in Review Newsletter.



July 28, 2023: Webinar on Building Trust in Elections: Evidence from the 2022 election cycle (Webinar [slides](#) and webinar video).

August 6, 2024: State Election Officials' Poll Worker Recruitment Efforts on National Poll Worker Recruitment Day.

August 16, 2024: Open Rain or Shine: How are Florida Supervisors of Elections preparing during hurricane season?

September 6, 2024: Communicating who is - and isn't - on the ballot.

September 20, 2024: Celebrating National Disability Voting Rights Week.

## Top-line observations for the 2024 Cycle

- Trust-building & misinfo combating comms:
  - Emphasis on process & election code.
  - Leaning in on bipartisan safeguards.
  - Robust prebunking efforts.
  - Robust Crisis response comms.
  - Local EO activity highly variable.
  - Content accessibility remains an issue.
- Innovations & challenges:
  - GenAI exploration in voter comms.
  - Building brand identity.
  - Presence online & offline.
  - Breaking through algorithmic architectures.

# The Election Officials Communications Tracker

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  - Build in-platform labeling taxonomy.
  - Manually label content.
  - Export raw data & metadata

# The Election Officials Communications Tracker

## Next steps

- Optimizing labeling process.
- Building analytics tools for EOs.
- Build interactive dashboard.
- Test message effectiveness experimentally.
- Secure funds for 2026 & 2028.

# Thank you!

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Team #voteredu

