



THE TRUTH SHALL SET US FREE: COUNTERING DISINFORMATION AND MISINFORMATION IN 2022

This document draws on insights from [Over Zero](#) and the [Voting Rights Lab](#).

Document purpose

Sharing proven and effective best practices for proactively dealing with misinformation and disinformation about the 2022 elections. The guidance below is versatile and broadly applicable, rather than a point-by-point rebuttal to a specific set of false claims.

Context

Misinformation and disinformation pose a threat to free and fair elections by sowing confusion about how to vote and disseminating conspiracy theories and false claims about candidates. Fortunately, faith leaders are effective messengers against deception and confusion. Unlike politicians or media, faith leaders have moral credibility and a deep understanding of their communities.

Proactive steps:

1. **On an ongoing basis, share accurate information.** On an ongoing basis, share nonpartisan factual information with your congregation and networks about how, where and when to vote, as well as the fact that states have checks and balances in place to ensure that every vote is counted. Bulletins, bulletin boards, social media pages, announcements, sermons, media appearances, etc., are all spaces to get the word out.
2. **Be on the lookout** for false claims gaining traction in your congregation and community, and think about what types of underlying beliefs and experiences anti-voting disinformation may tap into. Skillful correction begins with understanding why the false information or conspiracy theory resonates.
3. **Act quickly.** When you become aware of misinformation and disinformation spreading, correct it as quickly as possible. The more that people hear or see false claims, the more likely they are to believe it.

Correcting false claims:

- Remember, the goal is to communicate what is **true**, not just identify what is false.

- Invoke moral values from your faith tradition that inspire people to seek out accurate information, such as truth, wisdom and discernment.
- Use positive framing instead of negating the false claim. For example, if you hear false rumors that polling places will shut down entirely at a designated closing time, say “the polling place must by law stay open until everyone in line by 7pm has cast a ballot,” instead of “They’re not going to close the polling place doors and kick people out of line at 7pm.”
- Try to avoid repeating specific false claims or misinformation, particularly without first providing a warning or labeling the claim as misinformation or a conspiracy theory.
- If you must make reference to false claims or misinformation, carefully structure your correction statement and provide a warning:
 - Start by stating what is true.
 - Then frame the misinformation – “there have been attempts to provide patently false rumors that [misinformation].”
 - Then state the false claim.
 - Finally, reassert the correct information again
- Make your corrections as simple, precise and factual as possible, as opposed to simply disputing the false claim itself or framing it as something that’s debatable. Reference information sources that your audience finds factually credible. (This may vary from community to community.)
- When religiously, politically, racially diverse leaders are all pointing out that the misinformation is false, make this fact part of your message.
- Prompt people to question the motivations of sources of mis- and dis-information: why would someone spread false or misleading information (e.g., is it clickbait that would help them earn money)?
- Oftentimes, conspiracy theories will incorporate accurate facts into their narratives. (For example, the high proportion of 2020 mail-in ballots for President Biden were cited as a proof point for the lie of the stolen election.) If possible, provide an alternative explanation for facts that are used in service of lies.