



MORAL MESSAGING TO ENSURE EVERY VOTER IS HEARD

This memo draws on materials from the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, ASO Communications, the Defend Democracy Project, the Voting Rights Lab, and Over Zero

Document purpose

Messaging guidance for responses to post-Election Day interference and disinformation, to ensure that the will of the people is officially certified and duly elected leaders take office in 2023. You can use these messages word-for-word, or as inspiration for your own messages.

The Big Picture

As we anticipate delayed or disputed election results, faith leaders can help ensure that the final outcomes honor the will of the people, by:

- Proactively driving a moral narrative demanding that election officials count every vote, honestly certify the results, and uphold election law and the will of the people.
- Countering disinformation and attempts to portray legitimate results as illegitimate.

Our Values -- Invoke these explicitly:

Justice, democracy, honesty, dignity, accountability

Step-by-step Messaging to Counter Attempts to Disrupt Election Certification

First: Lead by grounding voting and election certification in values & collective action

For example: Across faiths and across race, people of faith believe every vote is sacred because every person has inherent dignity that grants them a voice in our democracy. That's why we're working together to ensure that all of our neighbors' voices are heard in accurately counted elections that hold leaders accountable to the will of the voters.

Second: Call out the bad actors, their actions, and their motivations

For example: But democracy has always had enemies. White Christian nationalists and the politicians who serve them have always tried to silence Black, Brown, Native and Asian voters by any means necessary, from violence against voters and honest election officials, to manipulating the rules, to stopping the count. It's the same sin today – with extremists trying to silence voters of color and stop the honest certification of this election so they can hoard political power for themselves.

Third: Close with a clear demand and a moral vision for democracy

For example: We need our election officials to uphold their responsibility to count every vote and honestly certify the will of the majority of voters. As people of faith, we're holding them accountable to this duty, and encouraging them to stay strong in the face of threats and conspiracy theories.

For people of all faiths, ensuring that we all have the power to choose our leaders is a moral issue. Free, fair, safe elections where we all have a voice are the foundation for building a multi-faith, multiracial democracy where every family can thrive in a safe, healthy community.

Short talking points on likely scenarios

Scenarios drawn from Defend Democracy Project's [Election Deniers Handbook](#)

Scenario: A campaign falsely declares victory

Short talking points:

- Elections are decided by voters and verified by election officials, not by the candidates. We the voters are still being heard, and the count must continue.
- An elected leader's first responsibility is to the will of the voters. We need all candidates to be honest and patient while certified officials count every vote.

Scenario: A campaign or political operative attacks the legitimacy of the election

[Examples: false allegations of widespread fraud, misconduct by election officials, claims that slow return of results is part of a conspiracy.]

Short talking points:

- Election laws have explicit checks and balances to ensure that every vote is verified, and these duties are carried out by certified and accountable public servants.
- As citizens and people of faith, we know that democracy rests on a foundation of truth. It is wrong and irresponsible to lie or spread dangerous conspiracy theories about something as sacred and important as electing our leaders.

Note: *In the event of verified malfeasance by an official with oversight capacity, new messaging will be produced by the Defend Democracy Project's Nerve Center.*

Scenario: During a prolonged post-Election Day counting and certification period, a campaign or political operative seeks to pressure election officials or public officeholders to stop the count, reject ballots, or not certify the results.

Talking points:

- When certified election officials take the time to count every vote, that's a sign that our democracy is working. Our vote is sacred, and it would be wrong to rush and leave any of our ballots uncounted.

- **Solidarity message for officials who are resisting political pressure in good faith:** Across faiths and across race, we are here to support courageous public servants doing the hard work of making sure that everyone can make their voice heard and hold their elected leaders accountable.
- **Pressure message for election officials who may be wavering:** Anyone who seeks to void or silence voters' power to choose our leaders commits a grave sin. Across faiths and across race, we are here to hold accountable any official who puts conspiracy theories or the interests of a political party before the will of the people.

Say this	Instead of this
"Count every vote"	"Count the votes"
"Certify the will of the voters"	"Certify the election"
"Election interference"	"Election theft"
"Election manipulation"	"Election rigging"
"Vote by mail"	"Vote absentee"
"Free, fair, safe elections"	"Election integrity"

Do's	Don'ts
Always verify election-related information before sharing it. Accuracy is more important than speed.	Don't engage in speculation or circulate rumors about attempts to disrupt or interfere with the election or certification of election results.
Share pro-active truth, rather than refuting false claims. (For example: "legally required checks and balances ensure that certified local election officials count every vote and follow the law.")	Don't repeat false claims made by those who seek to delegitimize the election. (For example: "there is no voter fraud.")
Speak about why counting every vote and honestly certifying the election matters to you as a person of faith. Make it moral and theological.	Don't try to sound like an election law expert or political pundit.
Help people remain composed and ready to speak out.	Don't bring up doomsday scenarios. This can activate fear and helplessness.

Talk about what we are for: counting every vote, certifying the will of the voters, democracy, human dignity, justice	Don't center your message on what we are fighting against.
Frame counting every vote and certifying the election as fundamentally about democracy.	Don't frame counting every vote and certifying the election as a way to ensure a preferred partisan outcome.