

To: **The Civic Listening Corps**

From: The Team at ATI

Date: December 14th, 2022



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**The Civic Listening Corps was formed in January 2022 to give communities across the country the tools and training needed to identify and fight the impact misinformation has on the issues we discuss online every day.** Our goal is to use the knowledge we gather together to prevent attempts to further undermine our civic discourse. We have created this report to provide a deep dive into key narratives identified over the last two weeks and to share some of the best examples of your efforts.

All of the information presented in this report was made possible by your contributions during our weekly guided monitoring shifts. Thank you so much for all you have done! **If you would like to invite your network to join us and learn more about how to combat online misinformation, they can access all of our materials by signing up here: [ati.io/signup](https://ati.io/signup)**

**There will be no report next week due to the holidays!**

**Want to read our last report?** Find it here:

📄 Civic Listening Corps December 7th Volunteer Report.pdf

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#### **Table of Contents:**

- [Major Narratives](#)
    - Election conspiracy theories about Arizona continue to circulate
    - Election deniers claim “Twitter Files” prove the 2020 election was “stolen”
    - Following up on the Georgia runoff
  - [What You Need to Know to Stop the Next Narrative!](#)
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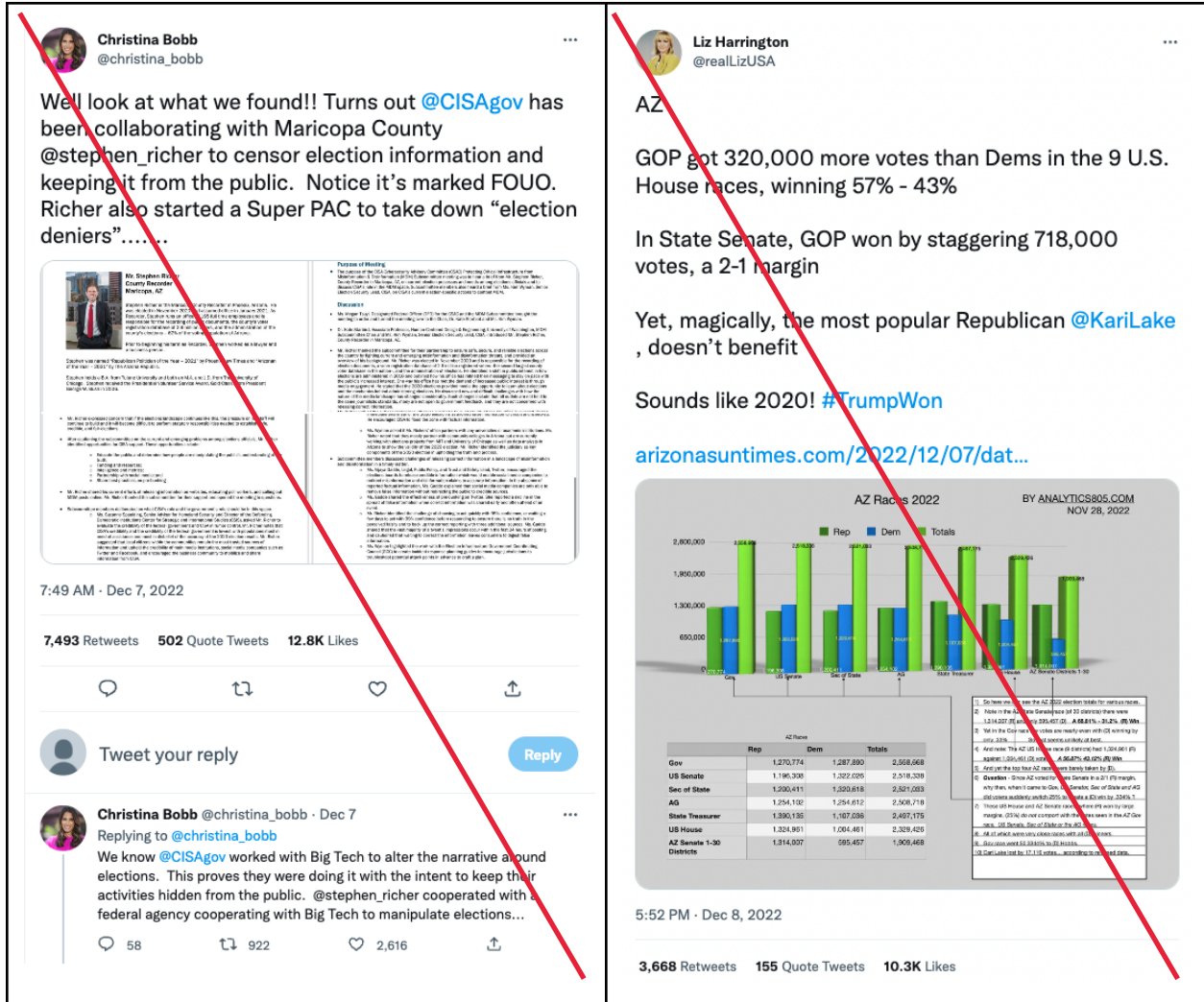
## Major Narratives

### I. Election conspiracy theories about Arizona continue to circulate

Election deniers continue to focus their efforts on Arizona, promoting several falsehoods about the outcome of midterm elections in the state. These accounts have accused Katie Hobbs – the governor-elect who also oversaw Arizona’s elections as secretary of state – of interfering in her own election to ensure her victory. Specifically, they believe she forced certifying the election’s results and worked with platforms to remove content critical of the move, though deniers [believed](#) the results were not valid. Hobbs is not the first nor only SOS to [oversee](#) her own election, and there is no credible evidence that suggests Hobbs acted inappropriately.

Also in Arizona, Maricopa County Recorder Stephen Richer continues to be targeted by election deniers who misleadingly claim Richer worked with social media platforms and the government to censor election deniers online. In reality, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) – an agency created by Donald Trump in 2018 – worked with elections officials around the country, as well as tech platforms, to share information about potential threats to elections. As Mike Masnick [wrote](#) in TechDirt, CISA did this “not by suppressing speech, but by sharing information to help local election officials respond to it and provide correct information.” In cases where content violated existing platform policies, platforms could decide to remove the content.

Lastly, a “data analysis” claims to have found suspicious voting patterns in Arizona’s midterm elections, claiming that too many voters appear to have flipped their votes to oppose Trump-endorsed candidates. A political PR firm, which typically offers various campaign services like speech writing and fundraising, [performed](#) the analysis. It found that many Arizona voters supported Republican candidates for State Senate and US House, while supporting Democrat Hobbs for governor. Candidate quality [appears](#) to have played an important role in the 2022 midterms across the country. In many high-profile races, Trump-endorsed candidates [won](#) their primaries, but lost their general election races. While many of Trump’s endorsed candidates won, most were incumbents or otherwise favorites to win.



Left: Trump campaign attorney Christina Bobb claims Stephen Richer worked with CISA to “censor election information.” Right: Former RNC spokesperson Liz Harrington shares the Arizona “analysis” that baselessly suggests interference in Kari Lake’s election. Images courtesy of Junkipedia.org.

II. Election deniers claim “Twitter Files” prove the 2020 election was “stolen”

Elon Musk, claiming to bring “transparency” to Twitter’s moderation practices, gave documents to two independent journalists who shared the files on Twitter.

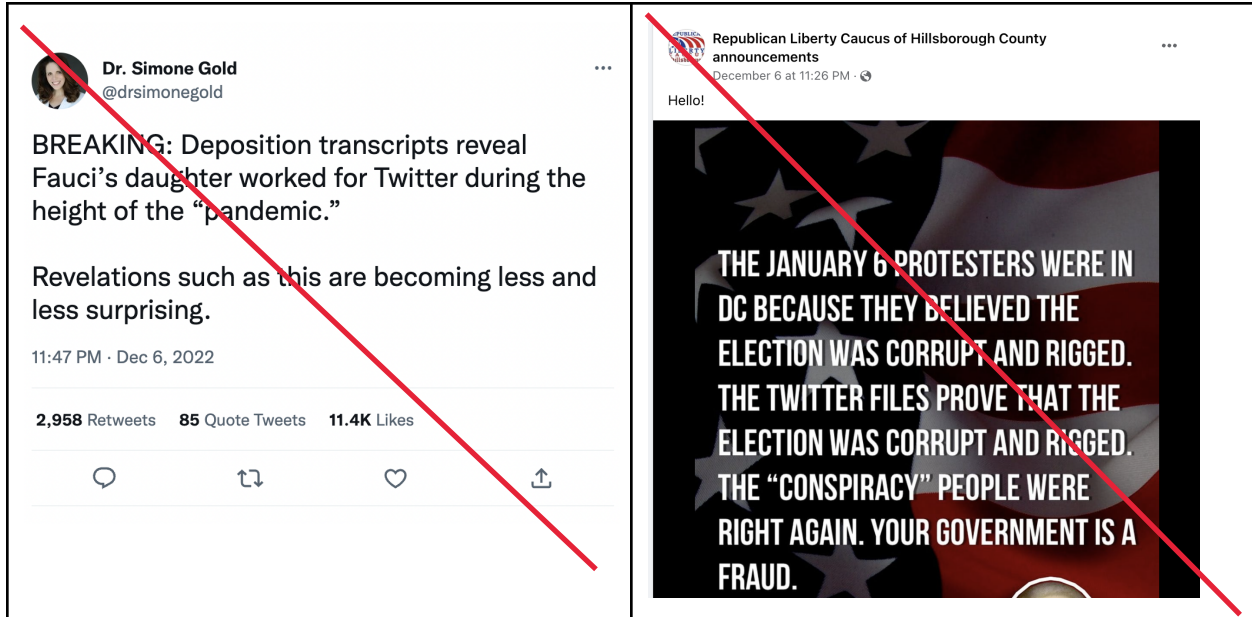
The so-called Twitter Files, first [shared](#) on Dec. 2 by independent journalist Matt Taibbi, detailed Twitter’s response to claims made in 2020 regarding editing emails on a laptop belonging to Hunter Biden, Joe Biden’s son. The emails allegedly implicated Joe Biden in his son’s

personal business dealings. Conservative individuals [claimed](#) that media outlets were purposely covering up the story in order to sway the results of the 2020 election and influence public opinion about Joe Biden. The second set of Twitter Files was [released](#) by Bari Weiss, a journalist and author, on Dec. 8. Weiss claims that Twitter limited the distribution and recommendation of certain tweets from far-right individuals or anti-vaccine supporters. Over the weekend, three more Twitter Files were released. These documents focused on the removal of former President Trump from Twitter and the January 6 Capitol riots.

Former President Donald Trump, in [response](#) to the release of the Twitter files, has called for the “termination” of articles in the Constitution. He is claiming Twitter's censorship of issues surrounding the 2020 election is evidence of election fraud. He also claims that the alleged censorship of right-affiliated individuals on Twitter is proof that Twitter attempted to sway public opinion during the 2020 elections. Trump has [capitalized](#) on this new information involving Twitter “censorship” to continue to make claims that the results of the 2020 elections should be overturned.

Furthermore, far-right media figures are [claiming](#) that Anthony Fauci's daughter, who reportedly [worked](#) at Twitter in an engineering role, was also to blame for the so-called “media crackdown” during the Covid-19 pandemic. Proponents are claiming that Fauci's daughter censored anti-vaccine disinformation on Twitter. There is no evidence to support this claim.

Overall, the measures taken by Twitter to limit the spread of disinformation and hate speech were not all that different from similar measures taken by other social media companies at the time, and many pre-dated the 2020 election. Elon Musk revealed internal communications from Twitter that confirmed statements made [previously](#) by Jack Dorsey, the former CEO of Twitter, regarding Twitter's moderation policy. There is no real [evidence](#) that Twitter's alleged censorship influenced the results of the 2020 elections.

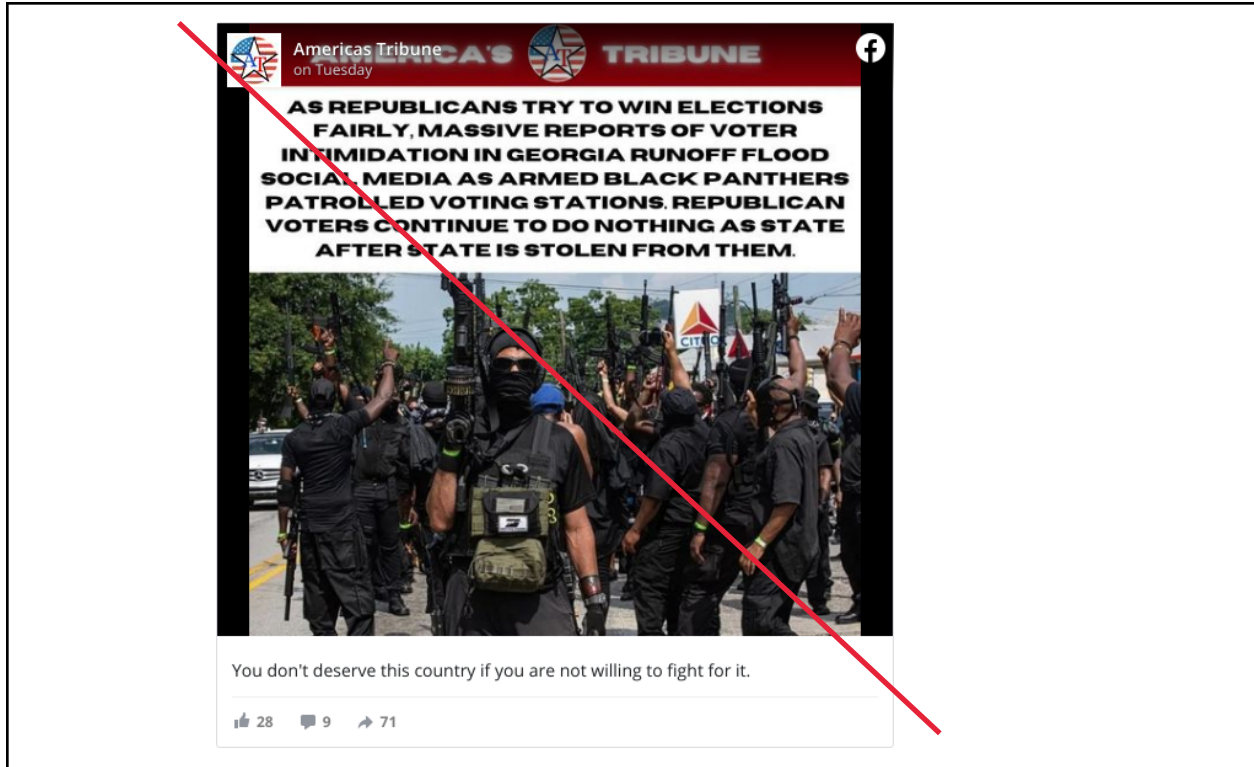


*Left: Dr. Simone Gold, one of the founders of anti-vaccine organization America's Frontline Doctors, suggests Dr. Fauci's daughter had a role in pandemic policies at Twitter. Right: Facebook user claims that the Twitter files prove the election in 2020 was "stolen."*

### III. Following up on the Georgia runoff

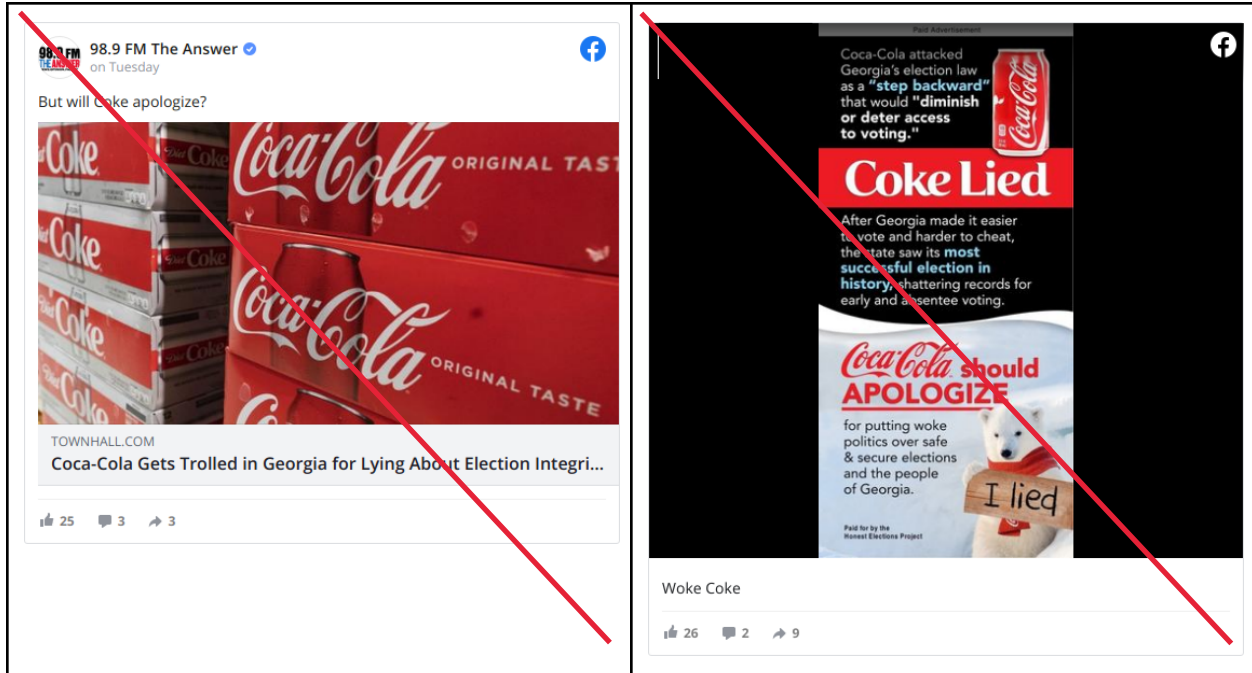
The 2022 US Senate election in Georgia ended last Tuesday in a runoff. Georgia is one of a few states that holds a second election if no candidate wins with at least 50% of the vote and – at the time – was the last uncalled Senate election.

The Civic Listening Corps supported the Election Protection Coalition in their efforts to monitor the race, identifying misinformation and assisting voters who needed help casting a ballot. Volunteers reported that the SPLC-identified hate group the New Black Panther Party (unaffiliated with 60s-era political organization of the same name) were threatening to patrol polling stations armed. Although there was no corroborating evidence on the ground, some misinformation spreaders began to use this as evidence that the runoff election was stolen or otherwise interfered with. However, the claim has not spread significantly on social media.



*Above: Internet commentator America's Tribune uses an unrelated image to claim that armed Black Panthers were patrolling polling places and intimidating voters despite lack of evidence. Images courtesy of Junkipedia.org*

A much more prominent narrative revisited some of the claims we identified during the primary – that the outcome of this race debunks the idea that Georgia's election law changes in 2021 was voter suppression. These posts called on companies like Coca-Cola and Major League Baseball to apologize for their prior condemnations of the measures:



Left: Ohio radio station 98.9 FM The Answer calls on Coca-Cola to apologize for allegedly lying about election integrity. Right: User shares a popular graphic calling the organization a liar. Images courtesy of Junkipedia.org

Most voting rights groups argue that early voting turnout is not a good metric of voter suppression, as the key target was vote by mail. It has also been argued that voters overcoming obstacles to cast a ballot does not mean that those hurdles did not interfere with the process.

## What You Need to Know to Stop the Next Narrative!

*In this section, we're sharing smart reporting from around the web that tackles the data deficits driving today's stickiest misinformation topics. Have a tough question you can't find the answer to? Have you read something insightful we should share here?*

- **What is Kyrsten Sinema doing?** On Friday, Arizona's senior Senator Kyrsten Sinema reported that she was leaving the Democratic Party to register as an Independent. While the situation is still developing, most coverage suggests that this will not impact the majority of the Senate Democratic Caucus; you can read PBS' coverage of the story [here](#).
- **Is Brittney Griner free?** Yes. After nearly 10 months [detained](#) by Russia, American basketball player Brittney Griner is back in the US. Her release was secured through a prisoner swap, in which the US agreed to release Russian arms dealer Victor Bout. Some have criticized the Biden Administration for agreeing to the swap, given that

former Marine Paul Whelan continues to be [detained](#) in Russia on espionage charges. Russia, convinced that Whelan is a spy, sees him as more valuable than Griner in a prisoner swap. NPR [reported](#) that “Griner's release was secured after months of talks and a number of proposals that had also aimed to free Whelan — which Russia had refused.” Negotiations to free Whelan are ongoing.

- **Who is running Peru right now?** On Dec. 7, now-former President Pedro Castillo [addressed](#) the country in a televised address and announced that Congress would be dissolved and an emergency government would be instated. This came shortly before an impeachment vote by Congress was [scheduled](#) to take place. In response to Castillo's announcement, government officials resigned and the top court – as well as the country's armed forces – issued a statement that he would not be supported. Members of congress voted to impeach Castillo and the vice president, Dina Bouarte, was sworn in and became the new president.
  - **What Covid-19 vaccines should young children take?** The FDA recently gave Pfizer an [emergency use authorization](#) (EUA) for its bivalent vaccine, which targets the BA.4 and BA.5 sublineages of the Omicron variant, for children under five years of age. Though some anti-vaccine advocates have baselessly argued the vaccine is dangerous for children, it continues to be the best way to protect against the currently circulating strains of Covid-19. Young children who [receive](#) Pfizer Covid-19 vaccines will receive a primary series of three shots, which includes the Omicron-targeted vaccine. Young children who received a two-dose primary series of the Moderna vaccine will be eligible for Pfizer's bivalent shot after two months.
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