

To: **The Civic Listening Corps**

From: The Team at ATI

Date: December 7th, 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 November 23rd Volunteer Report.pdf

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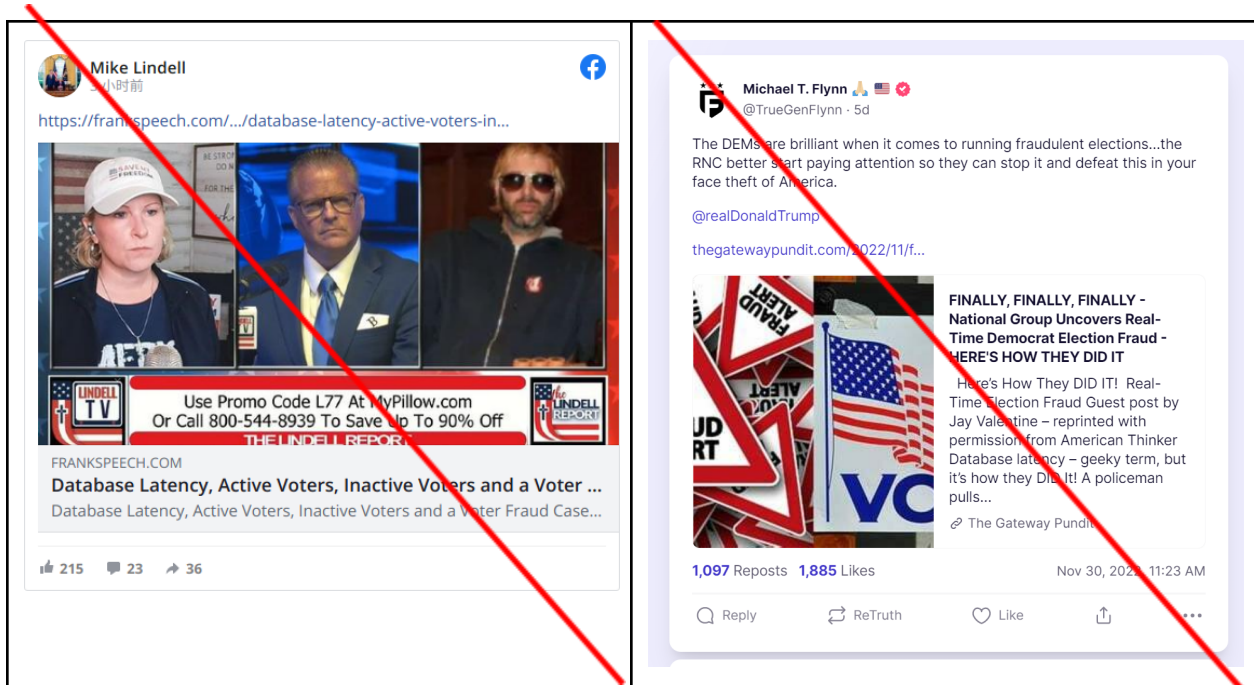
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## Major Narratives

### I. Election deniers claim races are being stolen using database latency

Some election deniers are claiming without evidence that a specific tactic known as “database latency” is being used to overturn election results. According to this conspiracy theory, county board of elections offices are altering a voter's home address to create extra undeliverable ballots. Board of Elections offices then correct the address before the National Change of Address Database can register it – taking advantage of this “database latency.” The election boards can then use those undeliverable ballots to give extra votes for their preferred candidate.



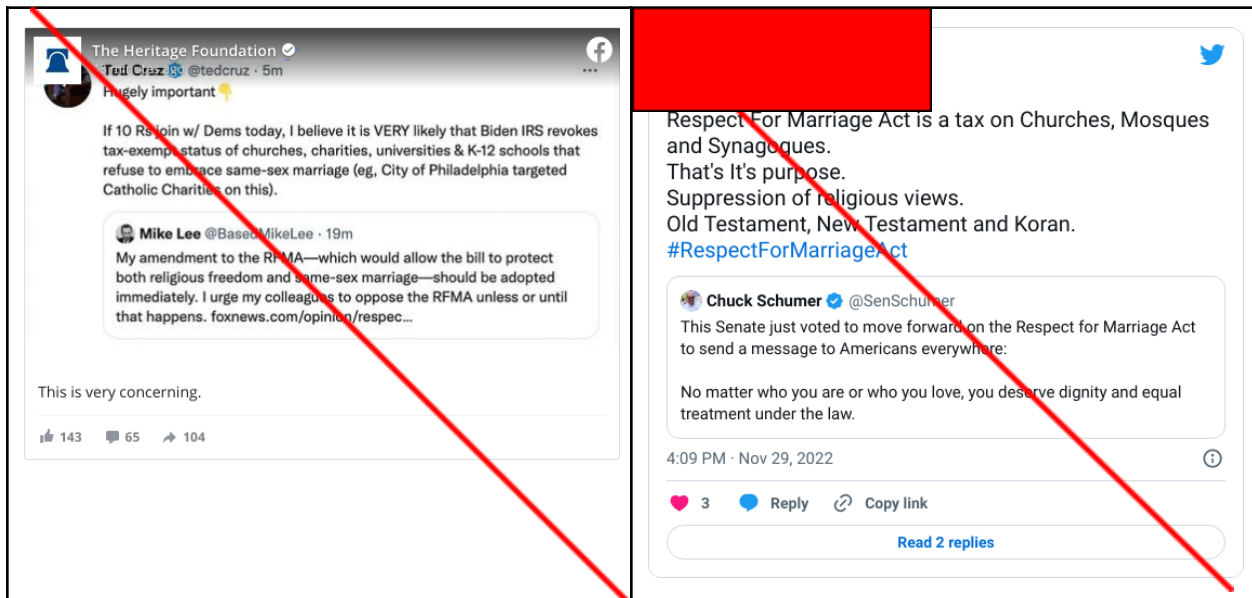
Left: Election denier and candidate for RNC CHair Mike Lindell promotes a link explaining supposed database latency to his followers. Right: Former General and National Security Advisor Michael Flynn shares a GateWay Pundit article in which they explain database latency. Images courtesy of Junkipedia.org

This claim does not have any evidence to support it.

## II. Arizona gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake refuses to concede election

On November 30<sup>th</sup>, the Senate passed the [Respect for Marriage Act](#), which codified same-sex marriage and interracial marriages into law. Although this law does not require that same-sex marriages be performed in every state, it mandates that same-sex marriages be recognized across all states.

Opponents across social media platforms claim that the bill threatens the tax exemption status of religious institutions. Currently, religious organizations, like churches, are [not required](#) to pay property or federal taxes. Individuals claim that because some religious institutions do not support same-sex marriage and refuse to marry same-sex partners, they will lose their tax exemption status. They assert that the federal government will find them non-compliant with this new law, which they see as an attempt to “force acceptance” of LGBTQ+ couples.



*Left: the Heritage Foundation shares a tweet from Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) claiming that the federal government will revoke tax-exempt status for nonprofits/churches if they do not embrace same sex marriage. Right: Twitter user claims that the Respect for Marriage Act is a “tax” on religious institutions. Images courtesy of Junkipedia.org*

The Respect for Marriage Act [does not](#) threaten the exemption status of religious institutions, nor does it allow religious organizations to be sued for their stance on same-sex marriage. The act does not impact private organizations or non-profit organizations. Lawmakers added [amendments](#) to the bill to expressly guarantee the

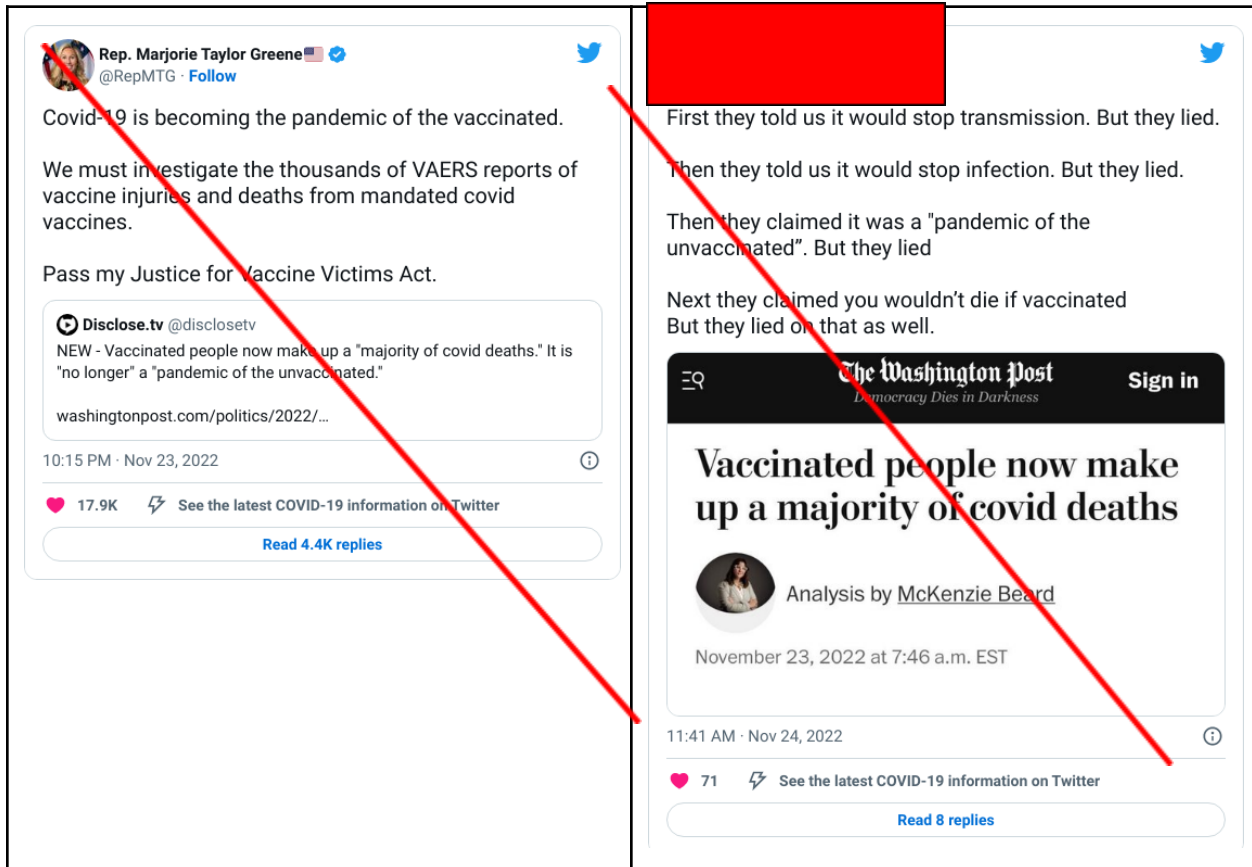
protection of what is seen as religious liberty, stating that religious organizations are not required to provide "services, accommodations, advantages, facilities, goods, or privileges for the solemnization or celebration of a marriage." The tax exemption of religious organizations, regardless of their support for the law, is not in any way under threat.

### III. Anti-vaccine supporters claim that Covid-19 vaccine is leading to harm after vaccinated deaths outpace unvaccinated

An analysis published by the Washington Post [conducted](#) by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that 58% of the deaths from Covid-19 in August 2022 were individuals who were vaccinated and boosted. According to their analysis, for the first time, the majority of Americans dying from Covid-19 are those who have received at least the primary series. The report, and other points of analysis, suggest there are several factors that explain why vaccinated individuals are dying in larger numbers than unvaccinated individuals:

- Most Americans have received some number of vaccinations against Covid-19. It is logical to suggest that they would at some point make up the greater share of Covid-19 deaths.
- Vaccines lose their efficiency over time. If individuals have not received the booster doses of the vaccine, they are [more prone](#) to severe illness and death.
- Individuals who are at the greatest risk of dying from Covid-19, are also the [most likely](#) to have gotten vaccinated. Although the vaccine has proven to lower the risk of severe illness and death, people with pre-existing conditions are still the [most likely](#) to suffer severe illness. In this instance, the number of vaccinated vs. unvaccinated individuals dying from Covid-19 is not dependent on the effectiveness or alleged harm caused by the vaccine.

Anti-vaccine advocates claim that because more vaccinated individuals are dying than unvaccinated individuals, then this must mean the Covid-19 vaccine is either harming individuals' health or is ineffective. Users across social media platforms are referencing the Washington Post study and advising that individuals not receive the COVID-19 vaccine:



Left: Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA-14). Claims COVID-19 is now a pandemic of the vaccinated, and demanding an investigation into vaccine injuries and deaths. Right: user employs straw man argument to say "they" said you would not die if you got a covid vaccine. Images courtesy of Junkipedia.org

#### IV. Election deniers claim ballot harvesting occurred in the Georgia Senate elections and will occur again in the runoff

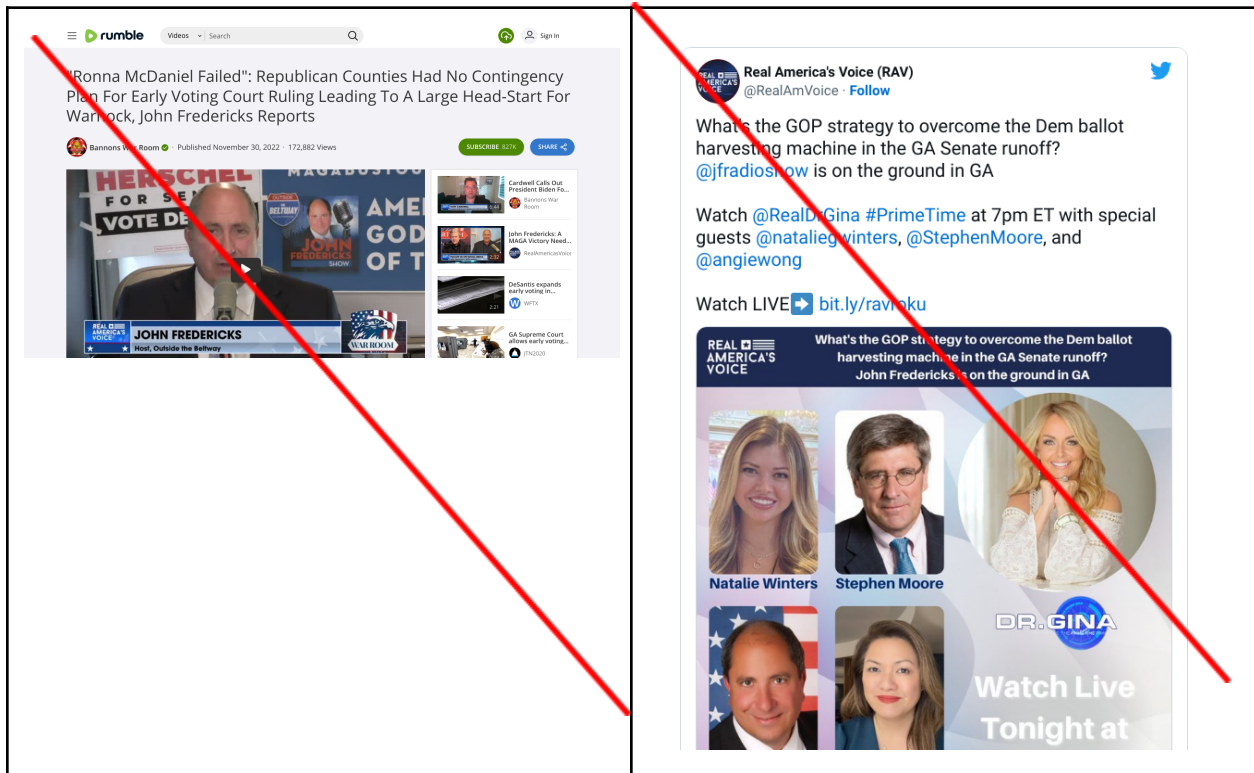
Some conservative users on social media platforms claim that ballot harvesting took place during the Georgia Senate elections on November 8, 2022, and allege that ballot harvesting will again be used to influence the results of the Georgia Senate runoff on December 6<sup>th</sup>.

Election deniers claim that ballot harvesting, or the process by which "political operatives collect absentee ballots from voters' homes and drop them off at a polling place or election office," was prevalent in the midterm elections and allowed votes to be tampered with or cast unlawfully.

Adherents believe that in Georgia, the results of the midterm Senate election were so close they

warranted a runoff because of election fraud operations such as ballot harvesting. Similarly, these same accounts predict that ballot harvesting will be used by Democratic Party supporters in the runoff to secure a victory for Democratic candidate Raphael Warnock.

Conservative party members are also blaming the chair of the Republican National Committee, Ronna McDaniel, for there being a runoff in the first place. Individuals say that the RNC did not do enough to create early voting opportunities for Republican voters in the primary Senate election, which they claim enabled Democrats to wrongfully harvest ballots. Furthermore, conservative social media users are calling on the RNC to monitor the runoff in Georgia closely for signs of ballot harvesting.



Left: A guest on political strategist Steve Bannon's podcast blames incumbent RNC Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel for a supposed failure in early voting policy. Right: the same guest, podcaster John Fredericks, is joining Real America's Voice to discuss the Georgia "ballot harvesting machine". Images courtesy of Junkipedia.org

There is no evidence that ballot tampering is influencing the results of midterm elections in Georgia.

## 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? Email Kaitlyn at [kaitlyn@ati.io](mailto:kaitlyn@ati.io)*

- **Which counties refused to certify election results?** After a contentious election campaign where many candidates seemed poised to interfere with election results, only two county election boards blocked certification. One was Luzerne County in Pennsylvania, which according to [The Hill](#) was initially deadlocked in their decision to certify. However, the county eventually certified after a lawsuit from the Elias Law Group. The second was Cochise County, a rural county in Arizona, who also [eventually voted](#) for certification after a Judge's order.
  - **What happened with the rail workers strike?** Last Thursday, [Congress intervened](#) before the strike deadline to enforce a new railroad labor agreement. According to [NBC](#), the agreement provides rail union members with an immediate wage increase and provides more health care benefits and an additional day of personal leave. Controversially, congressional leaders separated paid sick leave (one of the primary motivations for the strike) from the bill and voted on it as a separate measure, where it was [defeated in the Senate](#). This has been met with anger from rail union leaders, but the administration [claims they will continue](#) to fight for paid sick leave.
  - **What is the latest with the special master review?** According to the [Associated Press](#), the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit unanimously ended the independent study of documents the FBI found in Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate. In their ruling, the court argued, "It is indeed extraordinary for a warrant to be executed at the home of a former president — but not in a way that affects our legal analysis or otherwise gives the judiciary license to interfere in an ongoing investigation."
  - **How has Twitter's Covid-19 policy changed?** According to [NPR](#), Twitter will no longer be enforcing their policy to prohibit false claims about the Covid-19 pandemic due to the fact that they could lead to real world harm. This change comes after billionaire Elon Musk acquired the platform with the stated goal of promoting greater free speech online.
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