

To: **The Civic Listening Corps**
From: John Schmidt and Kaitlyn Dowling
Subject: July Volunteer Report
Date: July 13th, 2022



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 leverage civic engagement to combat online misinformation, they can access all of our materials by signing up here: ati.io/signup**

Want to read our last report? Find it here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uK2PPtOVu2_1dt4Tmv6o7SOIm7u4uRHK/view?usp=sharing

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Your Impact By the Numbers

We received 490 **reports** from our CLC volunteer team in the last two weeks! Here is how they broke down by our major misinformation topics (as of July 13th, 2022):

1. 209 issues related to the **January 6th insurrection**
 2. 154 issues related to **abortion and reproductive healthcare**
 3. 52 issues related to **elections**
 4. 31 issues related to **LGBTQ+ issues**
 5. 28 issues related to **gun violence**
 6. 17 issues related to medical misinformation (including **COVID-19 and monkeypox**)
 7. 4 issues related to **Climate**
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Major Narratives

I. *Supreme Court Overturns Roe v. Wade*

A. Claim: Trigger laws have had no impact on medical care for ectopic pregnancy

Since the Supreme Court's decision on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, medical professionals, reproductive rights advocates, and others have warned of the impacts on reproductive healthcare outside of elective abortion. Thirteen states with [trigger laws](#) have moved to restrict access to abortion – in some cases effectively banning the procedure altogether.

Anecdotal stories have spread on social media claiming patients in states with trigger laws have been denied [immediate care](#) for [ectopic pregnancies](#). Some posts have claimed that doctors, in fear of losing their licenses, have had to [consult lawyers](#) before proceeding with medical care that is necessary to preserve their patients' health.

Ectopic pregnancy happens when a fertilized egg [implants](#) outside of the uterus, often in the fallopian tube. No ectopic pregnancy is ever [viable](#), and can result in hemorrhaging and is fatal if left untreated.

Anti-abortion advocates have rebutted these stories, claiming that “abortion” is not necessary to treat ectopic pregnancy. Some have even quoted – correctly – Planned Parenthood's website, which [states](#): *Treating an ectopic pregnancy isn't the same thing as getting an abortion. Abortion is a medical procedure that when done safely, ends a pregnancy that's in your uterus...The medical procedures for abortions are not the same as the medical procedures for an ectopic pregnancy.*

Several conservative [websites](#), [commentators](#), and [advocacy organizations](#) have promoted the idea that abortion is not a treatment for ectopic pregnancy and, thus, could not be affected by abortion restrictions.

Anti-abortion advocates are correct that “abortion,” literally defined, is not the treatment for ectopic pregnancy. However, it is misleading to say that laws that restrict abortion have no impact on this type of obstetric care. Some trigger laws contain what lawyers and doctors say is vague language around when such cases can be treated. STAT News [reported](#) on a recent case in Missouri concerning an ectopic pregnancy. Dr. Julie Rhee, instead of using her own professional judgment, needed to present the case to a hospital ethics committee before proceeding with care. Though Missouri’s trigger law makes an exception when the mother’s life is at risk, it uses [unclear language](#) to define what constitutes such a situation. Though Rhee’s patient [survived](#), STAT reports that the “added bureaucracy took more than half a day of work” and the “lack of specificity over what counts as a threat to the mother’s life means some doctors feel pressure to sit and watch patients’ health deteriorate until they’re able to intervene.”

In a similar vein, some doctors and pharmacists have begun restricting access to the drug methotrexate, which can be used to treat ectopic pregnancy. The [Boston University School of Public Health](#) reports that “at least one Texas pharmacy has let area physicians know that they would no longer dispense methotrexate” due to its [effects](#) on pregnancy.

Aside from its use in treatment of ectopic pregnancy, [methotrexate](#) is used to treat some cancers and autoimmune disorders, like rheumatoid arthritis and lupus. Since the *Dobbs* decision, some [patients](#) have [claimed](#) they are [no longer](#) able to [access](#) the drug. Patient advocacy organizations have confirmed and are [aware](#) of the situation.

II. January 6th Committee Hearings

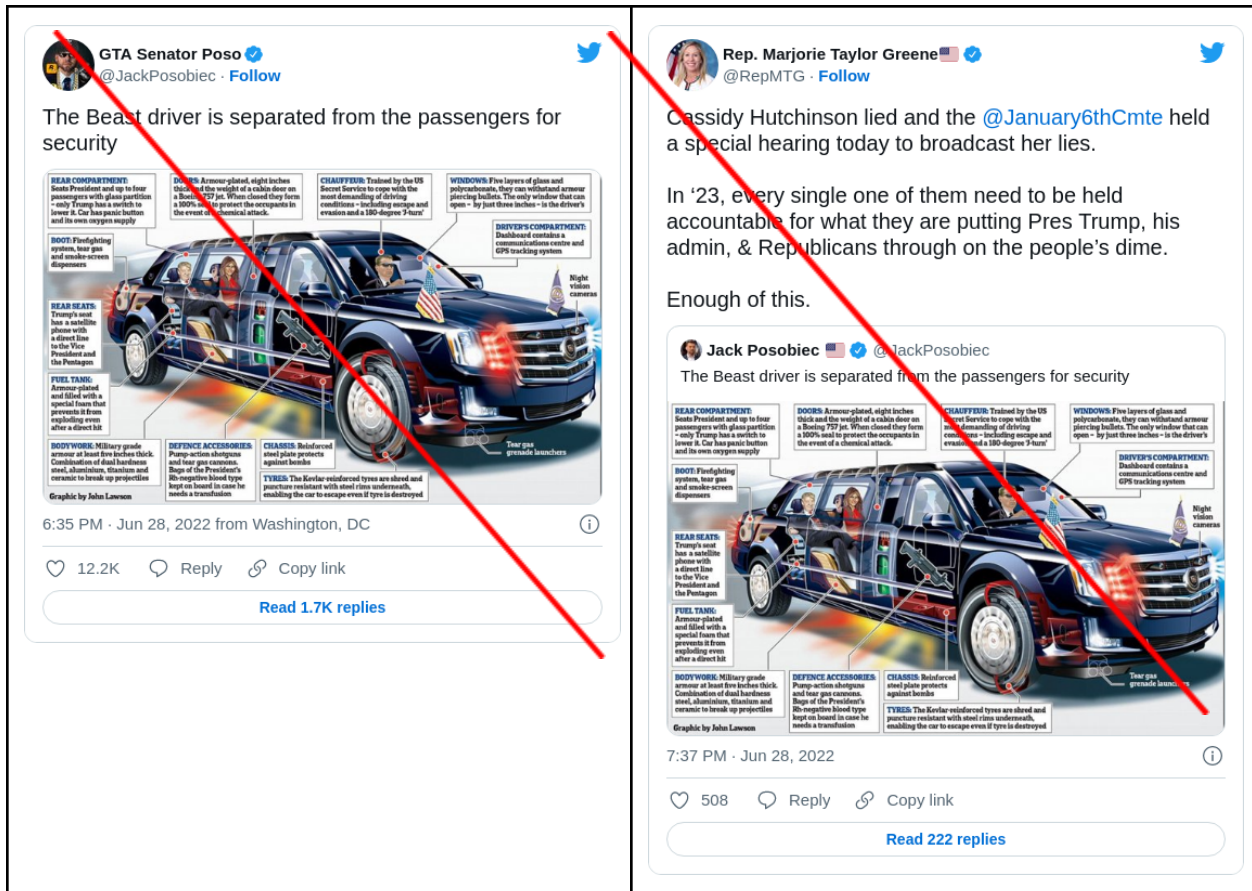
Starting on June 9th, 2022, the US House Select Committee on the January 6 Attack has hosted a series of hearings to inform the public about their investigation. [The goal of this committee](#) has been to investigate the causes and gaps that created the circumstances for the insurrection and create recommendations to prevent future exploitation..

While we covered this narrative in our last issue ([access here](#)), we have a few additional updates on what we covered:

A. Claim: Trump Could Not Have Lunged for Steering Wheel

One of the most discussed topics in the past week was the testimony of former White House aide Cassidy Hutchinson. While her testimony was meant to provide a broad perspective of the former president’s attitude towards the insurrectionists, a key source of controversy was the verification of Hutchinson’s secondhand account of Trump [lunging for the steering wheel](#) of his vehicle.

While the details of the drive are still being disputed, a specific claim being shared is that the design of the vehicle Trump was in made it impossible for a back seat passenger to reach the wheel. The claims frequently shared a [graphic](#) of the presidential state car, nicknamed “the Beast,” which appeared in the Daily Mail in 2018. The image shows a glass partition between the front seats and rear compartment.



Pictured: (left) online commentator Jack Posobiec shares the image from the Daily Mail as proof that the account could not have happened. (Right) Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA-14) retweets the post and encourages retaliatory investigations along partisan lines. Images courtesy of Junkipedia.org

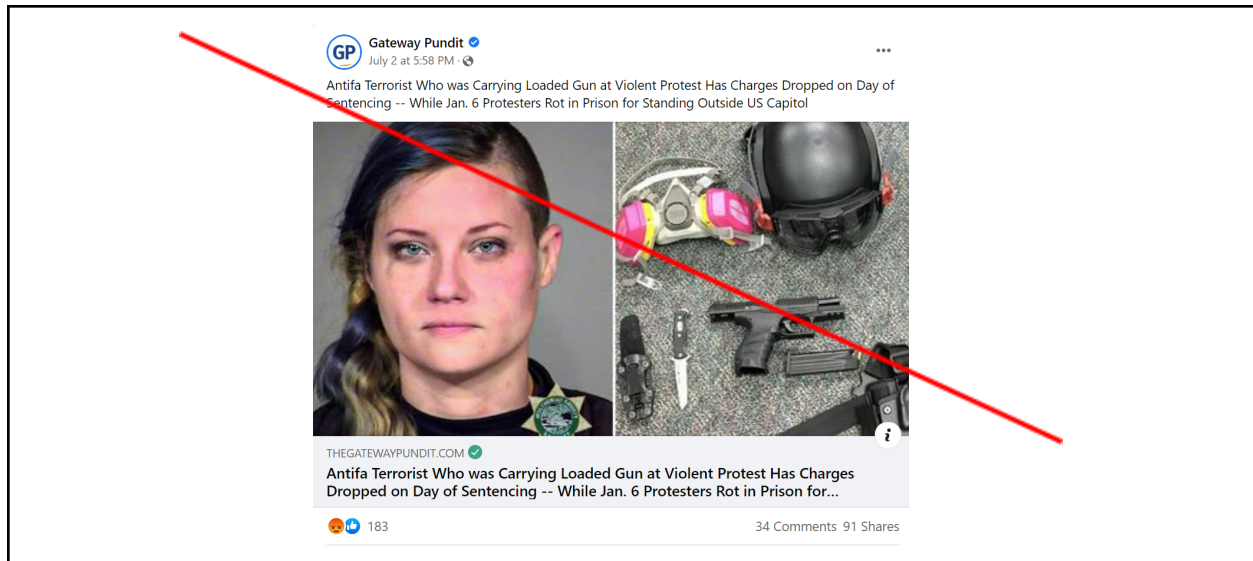
However, this graphic is misleading. Trump was not riding in the Beast at the time he was near the Capitol; he was riding in an SUV.

It is not yet clear what Trump's access to the driver may have been in the SUV. As of June 29, 2022, [Bloomberg](#) and other news outlets have reported that "the presidential SUV driver [was] prepared to testify under oath that neither man was assaulted and that Trump never lunged for the steering wheel.", but the use of this graphic to undermine the testimony is inaccurate.

B. Claim: Antifa, BLM are not Being Held Accountable

Another claim from our previous report argued that participants in the January 6th insurrection were being treated unfairly compared to left-leaning protestors such as “Antifa” or “Black Lives Matter” participants.

In the aftermath of the Supreme Court’s decision on abortion rights, this narrative surged once again. The conservative blog Gateway Pundit reported that an armed protestor who was arrested last year had her case dismissed on July 2nd, in the midst of the committee hearings:



Pictured: the Gateway Pundit article shard on Facebook claiming individual was an “Antifa Terrorist” who had their charges dropped. Images courtesy of Junkipedia.org

This new coverage amplified the logical fallacy that falsely equates damages caused during racial justice protests and the January 6th Capitol Insurrection. While fact checkers [have pointed out](#) that thousands were arrested during the protests of 2020 and 2021, right wing commentators continue to insist that the damage was far worse and no one is being held accountable.

An additional dimension to this narrative is the claim that “antifa” should be held accountable for the insurrection. On Rumble, there were attempts to revisit the claim that Antifa was responsible for the Capitol Insurrection after activist [John Sullivan](#) was arrested for trespassing. The activist had previously been disavowed by BLM organizers.

III. Highland Park Shooting

CONTENT WARNING: violent content, references to drug use, transphobia

On July 4th, 2022, an armed gunman opened fire on a Fourth of July parade taking place in Highland Park, Illinois. As of July 13th, 2022, 7 people were killed and over 46 were injured.

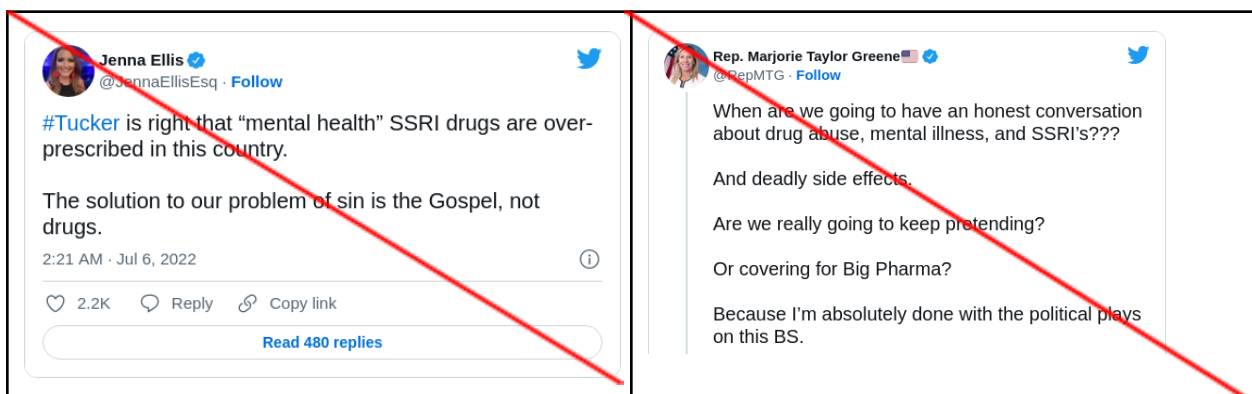
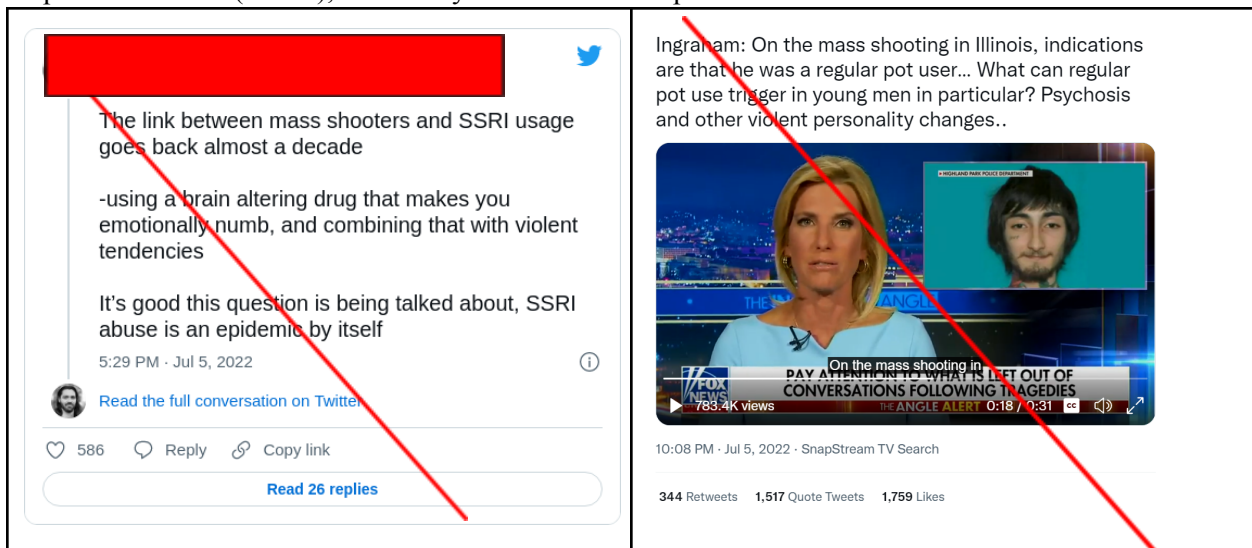
As soon as the suspect’s identity was discovered speculation emerged online about the shooter’s motive and pre-existing medical conditions that could have impacted his judgment. Some of this discourse is actively being manipulated to push conspiracy theories about political causes and common medical treatments.

A. Claim: Commentators blame Highland Park mass shooting on psychiatric drugs, cannabis

The most notable conspiracy theory volunteers have reported is that the gunman both abused recreational drugs and was prescribed psychiatric medication, and that this combination of drugs led to his violent actions.

Beyond the absence of a link between cannabis, antidepressants, and violent incidents, police at the time of the claims [had not released any information](#) related to the suspect's drug usage or medication. The discussion was pure speculation

US Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene, Fox News host Tucker Carlson, and political advisor Jenna Ellis began to use the shooting as a vehicle to criticize cannabis usage and prescribed selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), commonly used as an antidepressant:

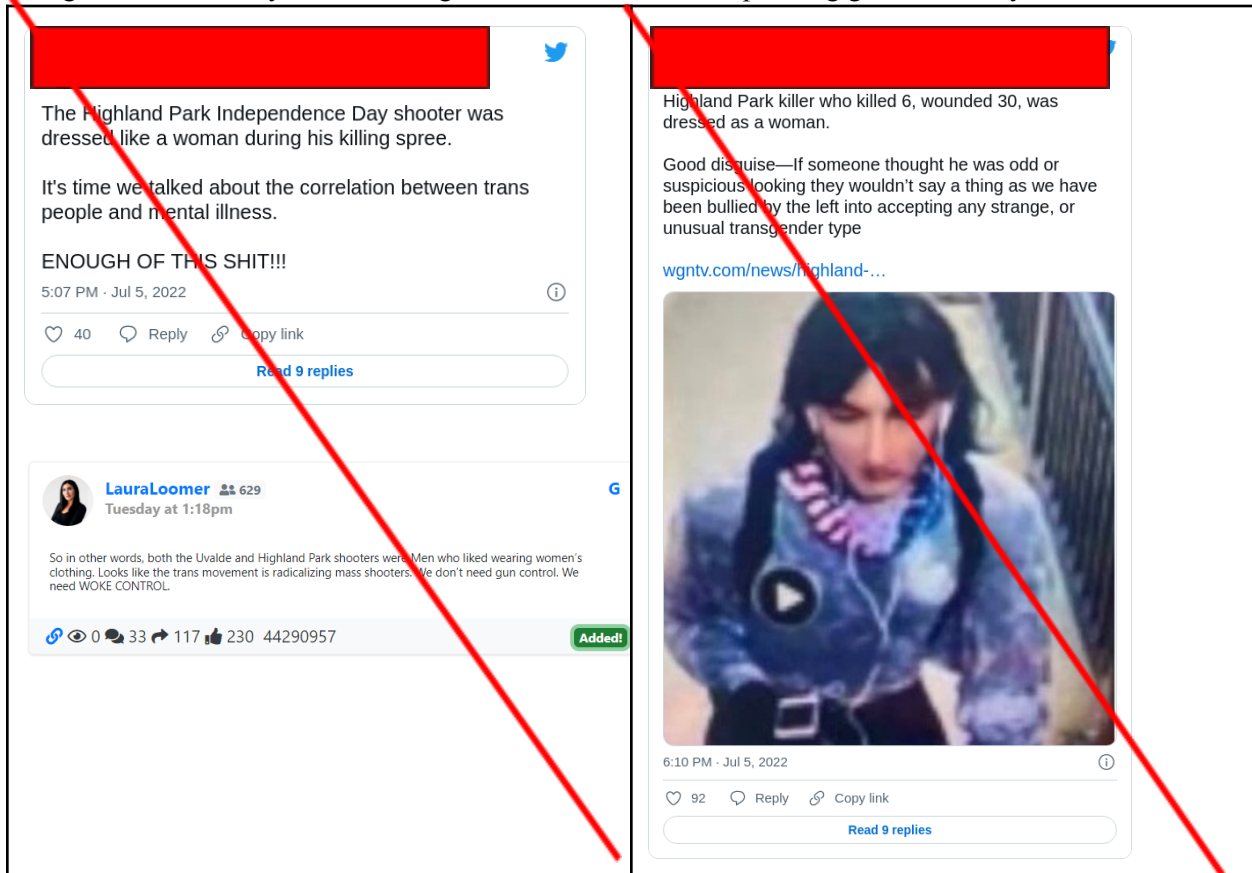


Pictured (top left) individual claims without evidence that there is a clear link between mass shootings and SSRI usage. (top right) On her eponymous show The Ingraham Angle, commentator Laura Ingraham claims that cannabis use can trigger violent personality changes and links the event to the shooting. (bottom left) former Trump aide Jenna Ellis uses Tucker Carlson's coverage of the shooting to promote an anti-medication, pro-faith message. (bottom right) Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene continues the trend of linking SSRIS to violence and claims coverup from "Big Pharma". Images courtesy of Junkipedia.org

B. Claim: The Highland Park Shooter was trans

After reports began to surface that the gunman was able to blend into the crowd by [disguising himself in women's clothing](#), commentators online used it as an opportunity to claim he was transgender and to otherwise disparage transgender people.

Attributing an inaccurate gender identity to a mass shooter [is not a new narrative](#), but is used to perpetuate a fictional link between transgender identity and mental illness, to blame mass shooting on the transgender community, and encourage more restrictions on expressing gender identity.



Pictured: (top left): individual claims that shooter's disguise proves link between trans identity and violence; (right): individual claims it was a "good disguise" because of modern assumptions around trans people; (bottom left); 2020 and 2022 congressional candidate Laura Loomer claims that both shooters in Highland Park and Uvalde were trans (neither was, and the latter was not in drag), and uses it to promote "woke control". Images courtesy of Junkipedia.org

What's Next?

Looking ahead for July, we are going to continue to monitor these narratives for further developments- with special emphasis on:

- Gun violence as bipartisan legislation attempting to curb it is passed and implemented
- Abortion and reproductive rights in post-*Dobbs*
- The final hearings of the January 6th Committee

Thank you for everything you have done! If you would like to join us on a shift to collect more insights like this you can sign up here:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0e4dada728a2fece9-july>