

To: **The Civic Listening Corps**

From: John Schmidt and Kaitlyn Dowling

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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**

There will be no September 30th CLC Volunteer Report. Instead, WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU about what is the most helpful information to have in the run up to Election Day! **Please take a quick second to [fill out our survey and let us know what you need to fight misinformation.](#)**

Want to read our last report? Find it here:


 [Civic Listening Corps September 14th Volunteer Report.pdf](#)

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Major Narratives

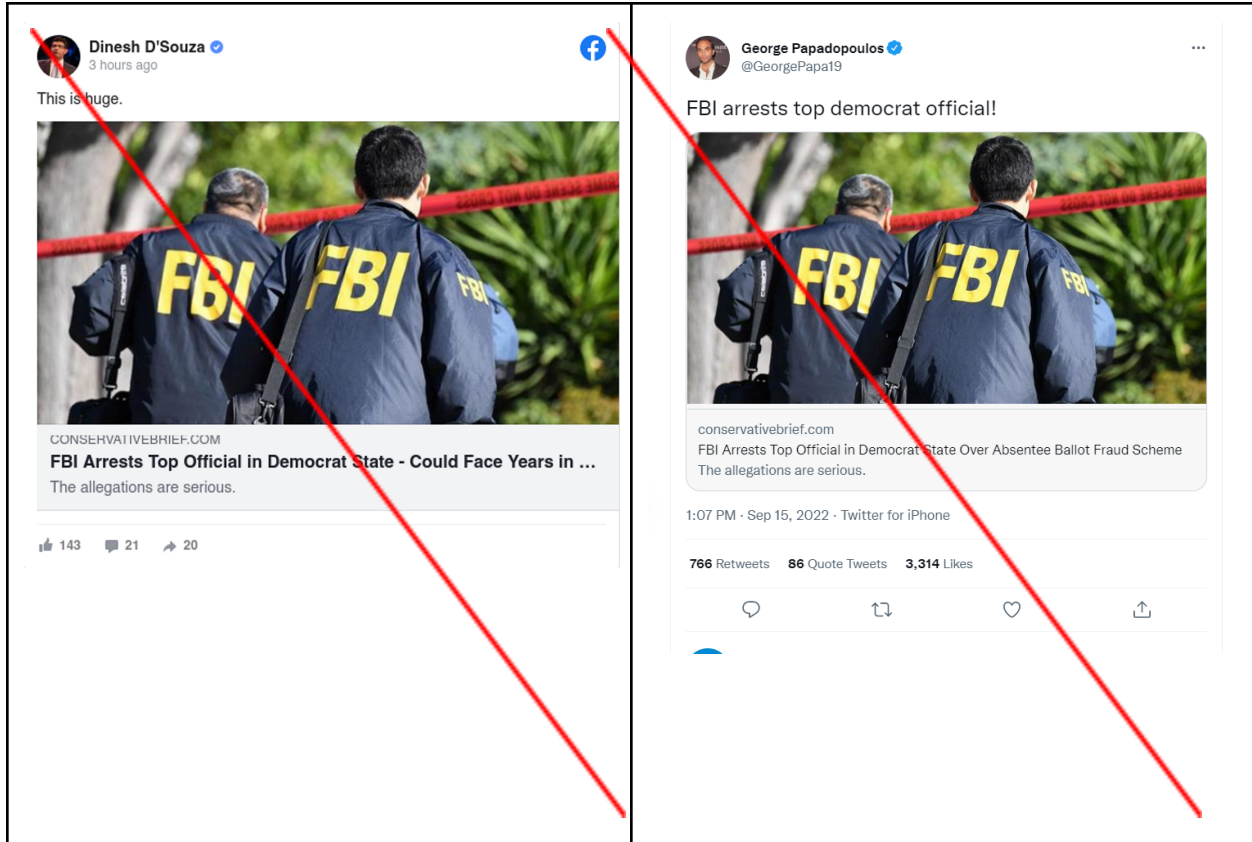
I. Voter fraud case in New York cited as evidence of widespread corruption

A local New York elections official was arrested last week and charged in an alleged voter fraud scheme. Supporters of the 2020 stolen election claim are citing this story as evidence of widespread voter fraud.

Jason Schofield, Republican Board of Elections commissioner of Rensselaer County, [was arraigned and charged](#) with 12 counts of unlawful possession and use of a means of identification. The Department of Justice [alleges that](#) Schofield applied for absentee ballots under other identities and used those ballots to cast votes in other people's names during Rensselaer County's 2021 primary and general elections.

There is currently no evidence to suggest that this scheme affected the final results of the 2021 elections. Despite this, some who endorsed the claim that the 2020 election was stolen are using this story to advance the narrative that vote by mail is an inherently fraudulent system.

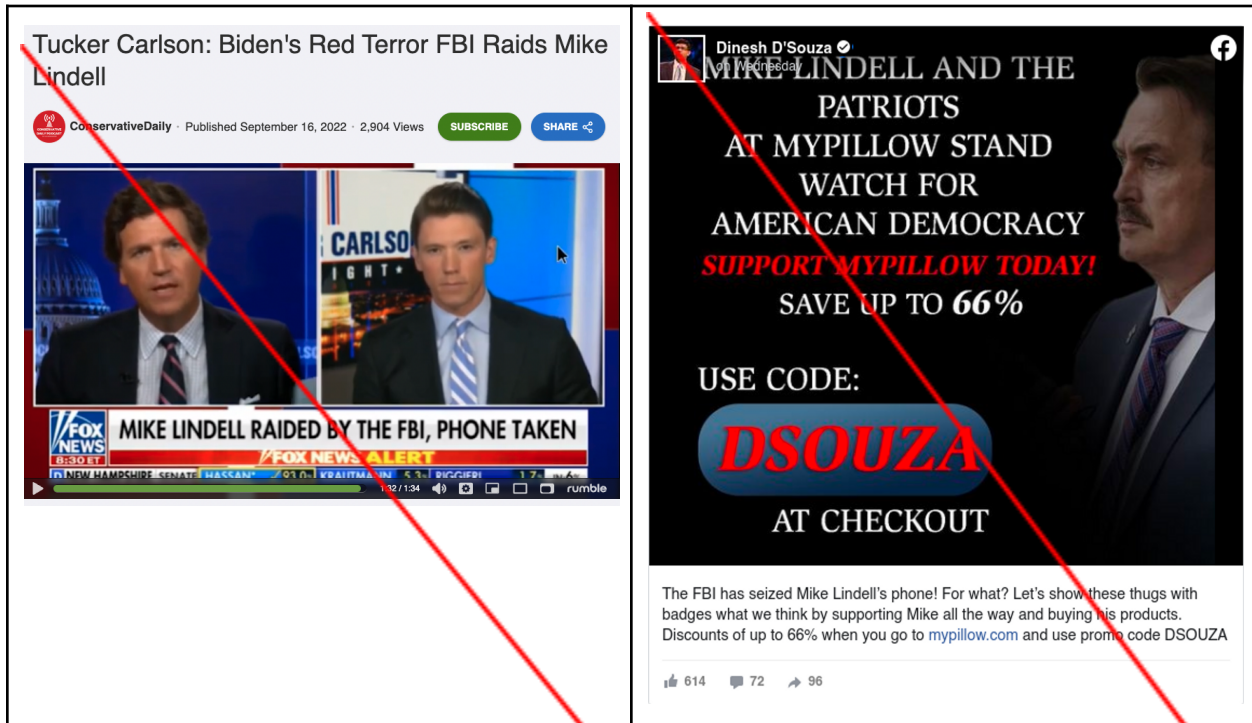
These claims often overstated Schofield's role in the New York elections process, and either omitted or misrepresented his partisan affiliation, preferring to focus on the fact that New York is a reliably Democratic state on the presidential level.



Left: Online commentator Dinesh D'Souza claims that this arrest is "huge," citing an article that refers to Schofield as a "top official in [a] Democrat state" even though Schofield is a local official. Right: Former 2016 Trump campaign official George Papadopoulos claims that Schofield was a "top democrat official" even though Schofield was an elected Republican. Images courtesy of Junkipedia.org.

II. Mike Lindell phone seizure leads to further claims of FBI corruption

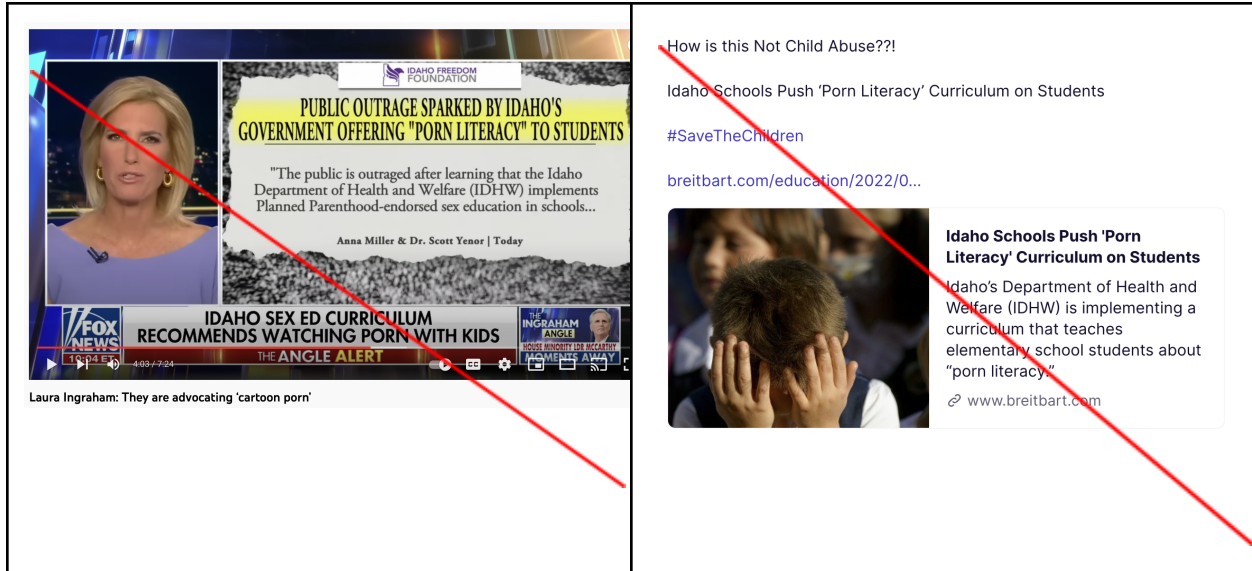
Last week, MyPillow CEO and 2020 election denier Mike Lindell said his phone was confiscated by the FBI at a Hardee's location in Minnesota. According to [CNN](#), his phone was taken as part of an "investigation into a Colorado election security breach." Lindell and others maintain that his rights were [violated](#) and this action is another attempt by the Biden administration to "[weaponize] the FBI against dissidents" and to "silence" those who support Donald Trump or "question election integrity."



Left: A Rumble channel calls the FBI “Biden’s Red Terror” in a post resharing a Tucker Carlson segment about Lindell’s phone seizure. Right: Dinesh D’Souza shares a MyPillow discount code on Facebook, calling the FBI “thugs with badges” for seizing Lindell’s phone. Images courtesy of Junkipedia.org.

III. Idaho group falsely accuses local school district of offering “porn literacy” to students

The Idaho Freedom Foundation (IFF), a group that says it is dedicated to “exposing, defeating, and replacing the state’s socialist public policies,” [falsely claimed](#) that Idaho public schools used a curriculum created by non-profit Education, Training and Research (ETR) that included a section on teaching “porn literacy” to young students. Proponents of the claim say this curriculum is part of an effort to sexualize children.



Left: Laura Ingraham falsely claims Idaho sexual education curriculum includes advice to watch pornography with children. Right: A TruthSocial user shares a Breitbart story about IFF's claim, asking, "How is this Not Child Abuse??" Images courtesy of Junkipedia.org.

Idaho does [use](#) a sexual education training curriculum from ETR called "Reducing the Risk." However, this curriculum [emphasizes](#) abstinence and safer sex practices and does not cover porn literacy or LGBTQ+ sexual health issues. According to reporting from local publication the [Inlander](#), ETR offered a training session for adults last year "about how to answer questions that young people might have about pornography," but it is unclear if any educators from Idaho participated. The session was never offered to nor intended for young people.

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

What you need to know about...

...the migrants Gov. Ron DeSantis sent to Martha's Vineyard

- **Where did the migrants come from?** According to [NPR](#), most of the migrants originally came to the U.S. from Venezuela and had been staying in a shelter in San Antonio, Texas before they say they were approached by a woman named "Perla." Perla allegedly told them they could board a plane to Boston, Massachusetts where they could receive work papers and other assistance. Two planes of migrants left Texas. Both planes stopped in Florida. One plane also stopped in South Carolina; the other plane made a stop in North Carolina. Both planes then made their way to Martha's Vineyard.

- **Why did this happen?** Earlier in 2022, the Florida legislature approved a bill to move undocumented immigrants out of Florida. According to the [Miami Herald](#), the law allows the state to “transport unauthorized aliens from this state’ in ways consistent with federal law.” But if the migrants’ flights originated in Texas – and the flights were chartered by DeSantis in Florida – that raises questions about whether they were removed “from this state [Florida],” as allowed by Florida law.
- **Why are Florida officials involved with flights between Texas and Massachusetts?** [Washington Post](#) reports that Florida officials were confident the migrants in Texas were headed to Florida. Florida officials say they have been present in Texas trying to figure out how to stop migrants “at the source” before they arrive in Florida.
- **How much did it cost?** It’s not clear how much the two charter flights in question cost. The total funding for the Florida program stands at \$12 million, according to the [Miami Herald](#), and came from “interest the state earned from federal COVID relief dollars.”
- **Who was involved in this plan?** Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis’ office confirmed the state’s involvement in the plan. [NPR](#) reported that Texas Gov. Greg Abbott’s office “was not directly involved in these plans.” It is not yet clear who “Perla” is or who she works for. No Massachusetts officials – including the Republican governor – were made aware that planes of migrants were to land in either Martha’s Vineyard or Boston.
- **Did DeSantis break state or federal law?** Right now, it’s hard to say. Many people have claimed on social media that transporting the undocumented migrants across state lines constitutes human trafficking. [Politico](#) interviewed several experts who seem to agree the key question is whether the migrants were coerced into traveling. Steven Block, a former U.S. attorney who worked on trafficking cases, told Politico it’s “unlikely that federal criminal trafficking statutes will come into play” given that the migrants were not transported against their will nor held captive. But if the migrants were coerced to travel, it gets more complicated. Immigration attorney Susan Church told Politico, “There is absolutely the possibility of both civil and criminal liability if people were lied to about where they were going, what they were going to get when they got there.”
- **What is the difference between an asylum seeker, a refugee, and a migrant?** People move from place to place across the world all the time. But their reasons for leaving a place can differ, and those differences can affect their legal standing in the place where they arrive. Terms like “migrant,” “refugee,” and “asylum seeker” each mean something different. According to [Amnesty International](#):
 - A **refugee** “is a person who has fled their own country because they are at risk of serious human rights violations and persecution there.”
 - An **asylum seeker** is “a person who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country, but who hasn’t yet been legally recognized as a refugee and is waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim.”
 - A **migrant** may leave their home for any number of reasons. There is no universally accepted definition of a “migrant,” but they generally do not fall into either category of refugee or asylum-seeker. Amnesty contends that many people “don’t fit the legal definition of a refugee, but could nevertheless be in danger if they went home.”

- **Who does Florida's law apply to?** According to the [Miami Herald](#), Florida's "program applies to 'unauthorized aliens' who are unlawfully present in the United States. It cites a specific federal law that says the term 'alien' means 'any person not a citizen or national of the United States.'"
- **Are the Venezuelans seeking asylum?** According to the [Texas Tribune](#), at least some of the migrants are in the U.S. to seek asylum. This makes "Perla's" offer of work even more strange: asylum seekers cannot legally work while they await the outcome of their claims.
- **Has this ever happened before?** Governors from border states have sent migrants to cities in other states – typically ones run by Democrats – before. On September 17, a busload of Venezuelan migrants arrived from [Texas](#) in front of Vice President Kamala Harris' residence in Washington, D.C. – the third bus that week. According to local reporting from [WUSA](#), busing programs implemented by Texas and Arizona have prompted D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser to declare a state of emergency. According to the [Texas Tribune](#), Abbott claims to have sent 8,000 migrants to the city since last spring, along with 2,500 to New York and 600 to Chicago.

...the connection between monkeypox and smallpox

- **Are monkeypox and smallpox the same disease?** No, but they are related. According to an explainer compiled by [Stanford Medicine](#), monkeypox, smallpox, and cowpox are all caused by related viruses. The first human monkeypox case was identified in central Africa in 1970.
- **How are they similar and different?** [NPR](#) reports that both diseases cause a skin rash, fever, head and muscle aches, and tiredness. However, smallpox is much more transmissible than monkeypox and more likely to be fatal. Smallpox was eradicated in the 1980s through vaccination.

...why railroad workers wanted to strike

- **What were the workers' grievances?** Last week, unions representing railroad workers and railroad companies reached a tentative deal to avoid a strike that would have had major economic consequences. Key disagreements revolved around lack of time off and grueling schedules. [Washington Post](#) provides a great explainer on several key issues, including companies' attendance policies, which "penalize workers, up to termination, for going to routine doctor's visits or tending to family emergencies. Conductors and engineers say that they can be on call for 14 consecutive days without a break and that they do not receive a single sick day, paid or unpaid."
- **What do freight rail workers want people to know about their lives?** [Vice](#) talked to them to find out.

...sudden cardiac death and vaccination

- **Have sudden cardiac deaths in athletes and children increased during the pandemic?** [Glenn Pyle](#), a professor of molecular cardiology, discusses cardiac death risk in the two groups and why we're hearing more about it now.

Situational Awareness

- **Following up on threats to Boston Children's Hospital:** [NBCBoston](#) reports on the arrest of a woman in connection to one of two bomb threats called into the hospital. The threats happened in the wake of a social media campaign by anti-trans accounts to target gender-affirming care services provided by the hospital.
 - **Keeping an eye on independent state legislature doctrine:** Former SCOTUSBlog editor and constitutional lawyer [Amy L. Howe](#) digs into *Moore v. Harper*. Notably, the case concerns whether state legislatures should have control over their state's elections without interference from courts. The case will be heard sometime this fall.
 - **Some sorely needed good news:** [BBC](#) reports on a new malaria vaccine from the University of Oxford: "Trials showed up to 80% protection against the deadly disease." Even better? The vaccine will be inexpensive to produce and scientists "have a deal to manufacture more than 100 million doses a year." Malaria killed an estimated 627,000 people around the world in 2020, according to [WHO](#).
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What's Next?

Thank you for everything you have done! If you would like to join us on a shift to fight misinformation like this you can sign up here: <https://www.mobilize.us/ati/event/493695/>

Fill out our Report Feedback to let us know what you would like to see heading into 2022: <https://forms.gle/a8CHUmu1Q4GaEH1C8>

For the rest of September and October we will be prioritizing:

1. The 2022 Midterm Elections
2. The COVID-19 fall booster campaign