2022 Midterms MDM Narratives: Summary Report

January 13, 2023

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What We Observed:

63% of the MDM narratives observed were variations and/or contextualized versions of broader MDM narratives that originated during the US 2020 election, while **59%** of the MDM narratives were related to mail-in ballots. **The highest number of total, new, and high risk MDM narratives** all occurred **during the 11/4/22 - 11/11/22 reporting period**, likely due to the increase in election-related discourse resulting from the US midterm elections on 11/8/22.

70% of the MDM narratives were identified in responses to Oregon elected officials and government accounts' posts on Twitter and Facebook, such as Oregon US Senator Jeff Merkley, Oregon Secretary of State (SOS) Shemia Fagan, Oregon Governor Tina Kotek, Oregon gubernatorial candidate Christine Drazan, and the Oregon SOS Elections Division. **There appeared to be a direct relationship between the frequency of posts by these accounts and the volume of MDM narratives observed in a given reporting period.**

Moving Forward:

A significant portion of the 46 identified **MDM narratives are likely to re-emerge during the 2024 election cycle** in their current state or in new variations. Due to the persistence of narratives from the US 2020 election and their ability to be contextualized to Oregon, providing **public messaging** ahead of the 2024 elections that **utilizes "prebunking"**, which involves preemptive messaging to inform users about MDM narratives and how to refute them, **could be an effective countermeasure**.

Executive Summary (Continued)

1. **46** MDM narratives identified since the initial reporting period of 7/15/22 - 8/12/22:
   a. **37%** of total narratives reached high risk

2. Top MDM narrative drivers:
   a. Comments on posts by elected officials (e.g., Oregon US Senator Jeff Merkley, Oregon Secretary of State Shemia Fagan)
      i. Comments on these posts appeared to primarily drive the reemergence of narratives from the US 2020 elections and contextualize them to Oregon, specifically when an official posted about a particular process (e.g., signature verification, accepting ballots that arrive after election day but are postmarked on or before election day).
   b. Key election dates (e.g., first day to mail-in ballots, election day)

3. Top MDM narrative vectors:
   a. Twitter
   b. Facebook
   c. Telegram

4. MDM Narrative origins:
   a. **67%** from national-level discourse
   b. **33%** from Oregon-specific discourse

5. Total number of recommended countermeasures provided:
   a. **24**

MDM Narratives Overview

How did the MDM narratives evolve over time?

Leading up to the 2022 midterms, the top MDM narratives by risk level and number of reporting periods observed focused on distrust in Oregon's elections due to mail-in voting procedures:

1. Mail-in ballots are used to commit voter and election fraud in Oregon.
2. Future elections can't be trusted due to the fraudulent 2020 elections.
3. Voter and election fraud has been happening in Oregon for decades.

This theme continued after the 2022 midterms and enabled claims that the midterms were fraudulent:

1. The 2022 midterm elections were fraudulent.
2. Mail-in ballots are used to commit voter and election fraud in Oregon.
3. Future elections can't be trusted due to the fraudulent 2020 elections.

Trends:

4. **63%** of MDM narratives originated from national-level discourse about the supposedly fraudulent 2020 elections.
5. **59%** of MDM narratives were related to voter and/or election fraud occurring via mail-in ballots.
6. Events such as the Tim Sippel v. Washington County trial and the "Save Our State" rally did not appear to significantly increase the dissemination of MDM narratives online.
7. **7%** of MDM narratives were directly or indirectly related to voting machines.
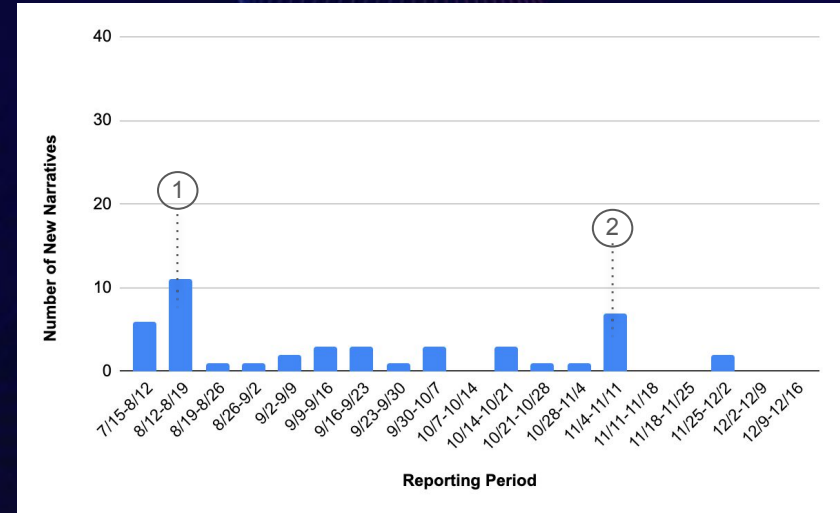
How have the number of MDM narratives changed over time?

Number of Narratives Per Reporting Period

Number of New Narratives Per Reporting Period
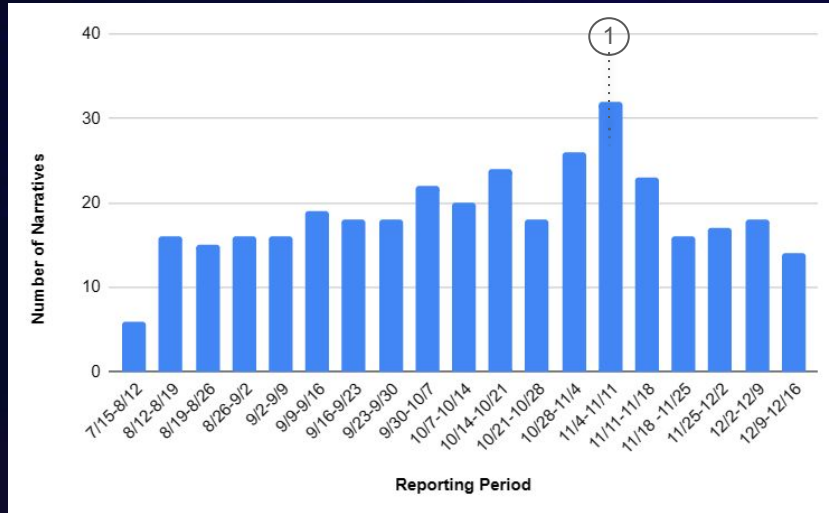
1. The number of overall MDM narratives identified gradually increased leading up to the 2022 midterm elections.
2. The highest number of MDM narratives was identified during the reporting period that covered the 2022 midterm elections (11/4/22 - 11/11/22).

1. The number of new MDM narratives identified was relatively consistent, with an average of two new MDM narratives per reporting period.
2. The high volume of Twitter users' replies to tweets by Oregon elected officials likely caused the spike in new MDM narratives during the 8/12/22 - 8/19/22 reporting period.
3. The 2022 midterms likely caused the spike in new MDM narratives during the 11/4/22 - 11/11/22 reporting period.

How have the number of MDM narratives changed over time?

Number of High Risk Narratives Per Reporting Period
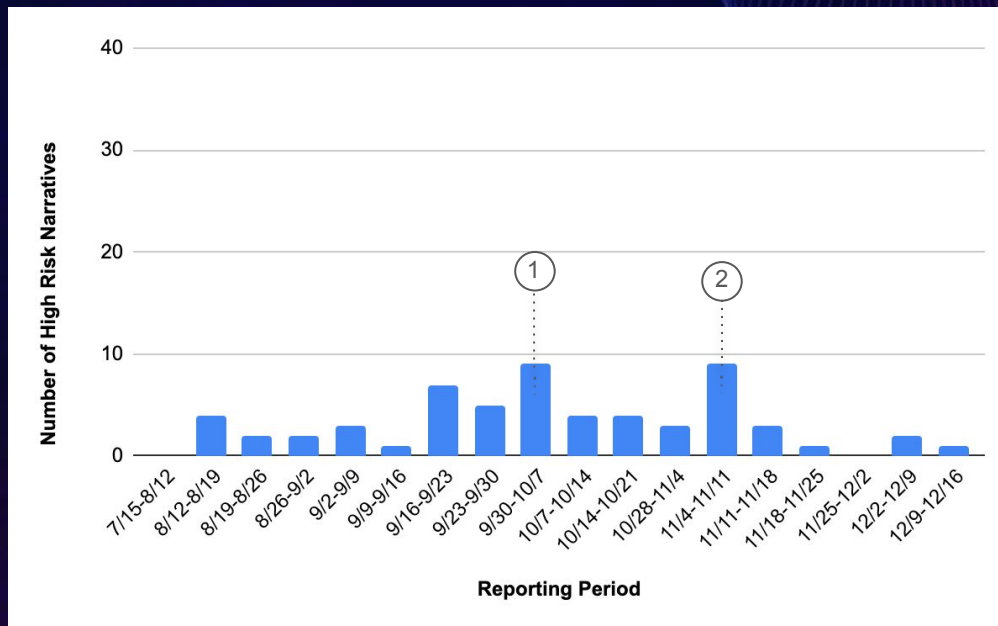
1. The high volume of content, specifically comments on multiple posts by Oregon US Senator Jeff Merkley as well as a Rumble video that repeated multiple previously identified MDM narratives, likely caused the spike during the 9/30/22 - 10/7/22 reporting period.
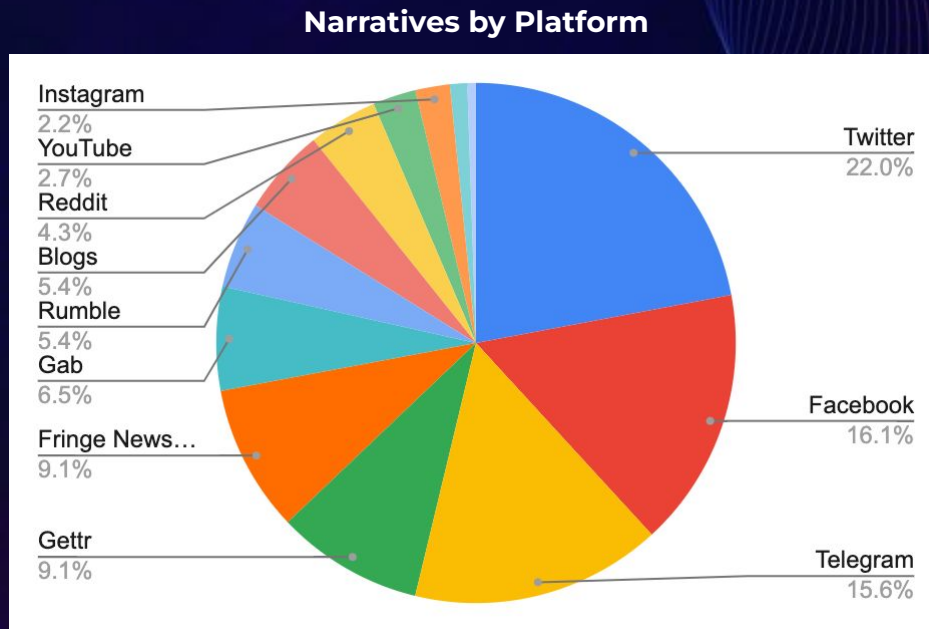2. The 2022 midterms likely caused the spike during the 11/4/22 - 11/11/22 reporting period, which included five new MDM narratives.

What were the most significant vectors for MDM narratives?

Narratives by Platform

1. Twitter, Facebook, and Telegram were the top vectors for MDM narratives. The majority of MDM narrative content identified on Telegram came from an Oregon-specific channel with approximately 1,400 subscribers throughout the duration of this contract.

MDM Narratives Trend: Voting Machines

MDM Narratives About Voting Machines

Voting machines, which were conflated to tabulation machines, were the direct subject of one MDM narrative and an indirect subject of two MDM narratives:

1. Direct: People should not trust voting machines because they enable election fraud.
   a. Description: People should not trust voting machines because they use flawed tabulation processes and are hackable, therefore enabling election fraud. Several users specifically called out Dominion voting machines for enabling election fraud.
2. Indirect: Future elections can't be trusted due to the fraudulent 2020 elections, and Oregon should eliminate mail-in ballots and hold in-person voting that requires voter ID.
   a. Description: Future elections can't be trusted due to voting machines committing fraud in the 2020 elections, while Oregon should eliminate mail-in ballots due to voters not trusting machines to count their ballots.

Users online cited multiple claims about why voting machines can't be trusted:

1. Voting machines are not secure and can be hacked because they are connected to WiFi.
2. Voting machines change votes because, according to a Gateway Pundit article, an "election hack built before the 2020 election" could swap the vote on a paper ballot to a hacker's preferred candidate and this change is undetectable in an election audit.
3. Voters should use blue ink instead of black ink to prevent voting machines from committing election fraud because while voting machines mark ballots with black ink which makes it difficult to distinguish from the voters' original markings, machines have "zero trouble accepting and scanning ballots marked with a blue ball point pen."

Significance: Despite Oregon conducting elections solely via mail-in ballots, MDM narratives related to voting machines formed primarily because users conflated voting machines with tabulation machines. However, there were significantly less of these Oregon-specific MDM narratives relative to national-level MDM narratives about voting machines.

Top 5 MDM Narratives by Risk Level

Narrative 1: Mail-in ballots are used to commit voter and election fraud in Oregon.

1. **Description:** Users online claimed that mail-in ballots are used to commit voter and election fraud in Oregon. Some users also claimed that Oregon has not had a free and fair election since mail-in ballots were implemented. This narrative originated from national-level discourse about voter and election fraud through mail-in ballot voting.

2. **Metrics:**
   a. **Reporting Period Discovered:** 7/15/22 - 8/12/22
   b. **% of Reporting Periods Observed:** 100%
   c. **Average Risk Level:** High
   d. **Platforms:** Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Reddit, Telegram, Gettr, Gab, Rumble, Fringe News Outlets (Gateway Pundit, Oregon Catalyst, Redoubt News, Raw Story), Oregon-Specific Blogs (Audit Oregon), Fringe Forums (ar15.com, instapundit.com, greatawakening.win)

3. **Potential Impact:** This narrative could decrease Oregon voters' confidence in the legitimacy of mail-in ballots as an election procedure and the outcomes of elections

4. **Provided Countermeasure:** Provide messaging about measures that help prevent voter and election fraud via mail-in ballots.

Narrative 2: Future elections can't be trusted due to the fraudulent 2020 elections.

1. **Description:** Users online expressed low levels of trust in Oregon's election procedures and results and therefore do not trust future Oregon election results. Some users claimed or implied that this lack of trust is due to the supposedly fraudulent 2020 elections. This narrative originated from national-level discourse about the 2020 elections.

2. **Metrics**
    a. **Reporting Period Discovered:** 7/15/22 - 8/12/22
    b. **% of Reporting Periods Observed:** 100%
    c. **Average Risk Level:** High
    d. **Platforms:** Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Reddit, Telegram, Gettr, Gab, Rumble, Fringe News Outlets (Gateway Pundit), Oregon-Specific Blogs (auditoregon.org, Northwest Observer), Fringe Forums (instapundit.com, greatawakening.win)

3. **Potential Impact:** This narrative could decrease Oregon voters' confidence in election procedures and results.

4. **Provided Countermeasure:** Provide public messaging about Oregon historically holding free and fair elections.

Narrative 3: Voter and election fraud has been happening in Oregon for decades.

1. **Description:** Users online claimed that there has been voter and election fraud in Oregon since mail-in ballot voting was enacted in 1998. Users claimed that the lack of Republican governors is evidence of voter and election fraud.

2. **Metrics:**
   a. **Reporting Period Discovered:** 7/15/22 - 8/12/22
   b. **% of Reporting Periods Observed:** 100%
   c. **Average Risk Level:** Medium
   d. **Platforms:** Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Telegram, Gettr, Gab, Rumble, Fringe News Outlets (Gateway Pundit, Raw Story), Fringe Forums (ar15.com, greatawakening.win)

3. **Potential Impact:** This narrative could negatively impact Oregon voters' trust in the outcomes of elections.

4. **Provided Countermeasure:** Provide messaging about Oregon historically holding free and fair elections.

Narrative 4: Oregon should eliminate mail-in ballots and hold in-person voting that requires voter ID.

1. **Description:** Users online called for Oregon to eliminate mail-in voting because the system is vulnerable to voter and election fraud. Users expressed support for in-person voting, voter IDs, and paper ballots.

2. **Metrics:**
    a. **Reporting Period Discovered:** 8/12/22 - 8/19/22
    b. **% of Reporting Periods Observed:** 95%
    c. **Average Risk Level:** Medium
    d. **Platforms:** Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Reddit, Telegram, Gettr, Gab, Fringe News Outlets (Gateway Pundit)

3. **Potential Impact:** This narrative could decrease Oregon voters' confidence in the legitimacy of mail-in ballots as an election procedure.

4. **Provided Countermeasure:** Provide messaging about measures that help prevent voter and election fraud via mail-in ballots.

Narrative 5: Oregon's 2022 midterm elections were fraudulent.

1. **Description:** Users online claimed that Oregon's 2022 midterms were fraudulent. Users cited previously identified narratives, such as mail-in ballots and ballot harvesting are used to commit voter and election fraud in Oregon, as evidence. Some users expressed hope that election results would be challenged.

2. **Metrics:**
   a. **Reporting Period Discovered:** 11/4/22 - 11/11/22
   b. **% of Reporting Periods Observed:** 32% (Note: This percent is significantly lower than the percents of other top narratives due to it emerging as a result of the 2022 midterms, which occurred during the 14th reporting period of this contract out of 19 total reporting periods.)
   c. **Average Risk Level:** High
   d. **Platforms:** Twitter, Facebook, Telegram, Gettr, Gab, Fringe News Outlets (Gateway Pundit, Redoubt News), Oregon-Specific Blogs (Truth in the Pacific Northwest), Fringe Forums (American Thinker, greatawakening.win)

3. **Potential Impact:** This narrative could decrease Oregon voters' confidence in the legitimacy of mail-in ballots as an election procedure and Oregon voters' confidence in the outcomes of elections.

4. **Provided Countermeasure:** Provide messaging about Oregon historically holding free and fair elections.

Threat Alerts Overview

Threat Alerts

Two threats were identified:

1. **12/2/22 - 12/9/22 Reporting Period:** A potential threat to Oregon Governor Kate Brown, Oregon Secretary of State (SOS) Shemia Fagan, and Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum. The threat was posted on Telegram on Saturday, December 3, 2022.
   a. **Threat:** "I think they call that treason. And I don't think banning these people from government is enough. They should be expelled from planet earth."
   b. The user's threat was a response to a post calling out Oregon Governor Kate Brown, Oregon Secretary of State (SOS) Shemia Fagan, Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum, and "many other officials" for "violating their oaths of office."
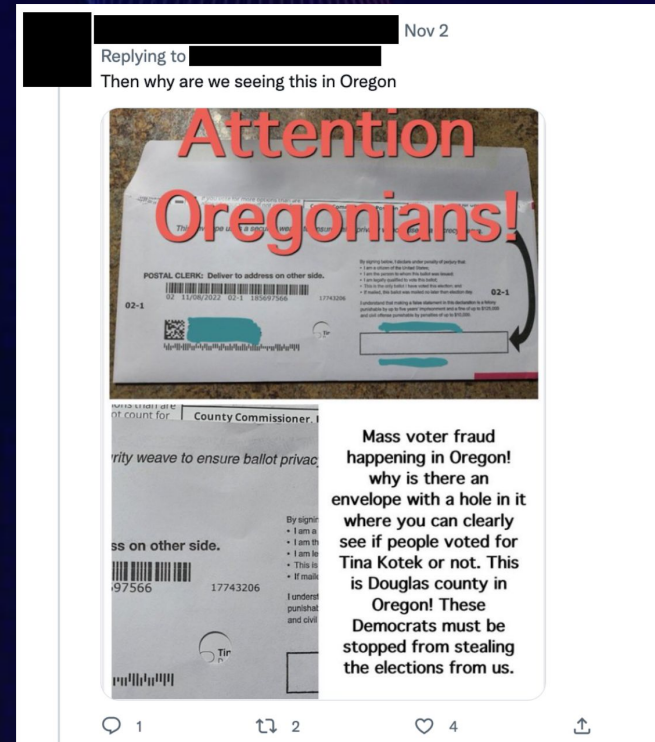
2. **12/9/22 - 12/16/22 Reporting Period:** Identified a potential threat against Oregon Secretary of State (SOS) Shemia Fagan by a user commenting on a Gateway Pundit article. The threat was posted on Monday, December 19, 2022.
   a. **Threat:** "HANG THEM IN THE SQUARE"
   b. The user's threat was a response to a Gateway Pundit Article calling out President Joe Biden, Oregon Secretary of State (SOS) Shemia Fagan, and "Oregon Democrats" for accepting $500,000 in donations from former Futures Exchange (FTX) Director of Engineering, Nishad Singh.

Appendix A: Screenshots

Narrative 1: Mail in ballots are used to commit voter and election fraud in Oregon

Replying to
Mail in voting is fraud all by itself.

💬 12   🔁 1   ♡ 75   ⬆️

(See link here.)

Nov 2
Replying to
Then why are we seeing this in Oregon

Attention Oregonians!

POSTAL CLERK: Deliver to address on other side.

County Commissioner,

Mass voter fraud happening in Oregon! why is there an envelope with a hole in it where you can clearly see if people voted for Tina Kotek or not. This is Douglas county in Oregon! These Democrats must be stopped from stealing the elections from us.

💬 1   🔁 2   ♡ 4   ⬆️

(See link here.)

Narrative 2: Future elections can't be trusted due to the fraudulent 2020 elections.

(See link here.)

(See link here.)

Narrative 3: Voter and election fraud has been happening in Oregon for decades.
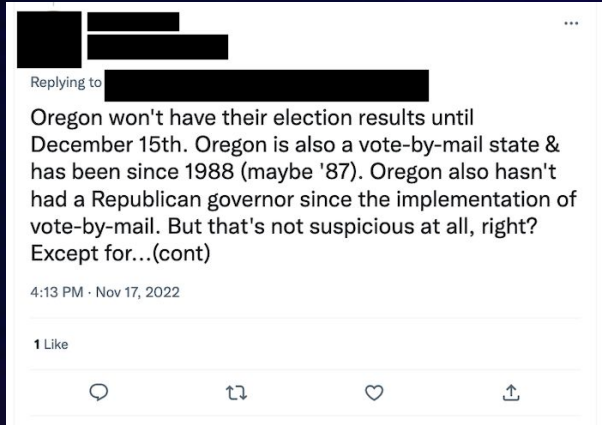
(See link here.)
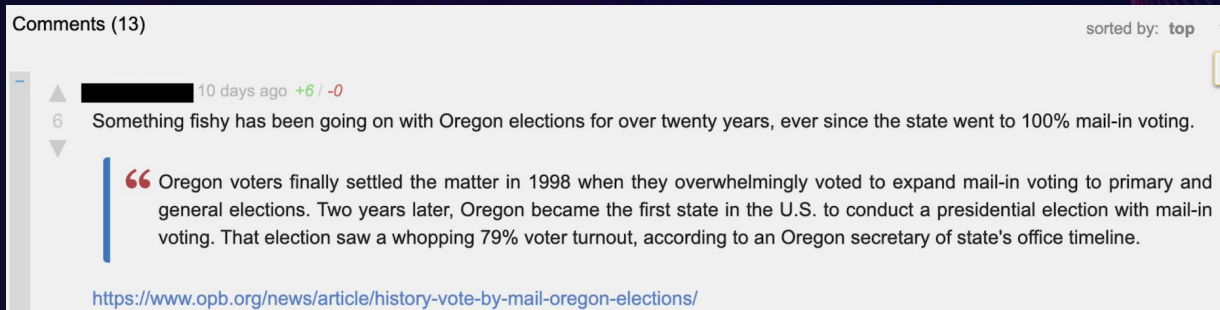
(See link here.)

Narrative 4: Oregon should eliminate mail-in ballots and hold in-person voting that requires voter ID.

By the way, any person in Oregon can vote in person if they wish to by going to the elections office and casting an early ballot. Those who feel strongly about this should exercise their right to do so, but they don't get to dictate that method for all. Seems pretty fair to me.

(See link here.)

OUR GOVERNMENT MUST RETURN TO PAPER BALLOTS FOR OUR ELECTIONS. THEN, YOU WOULD HAVE ELECTIONS THAT EVERYBODY COULD BE PROUD OF. BECAUSE RIGHT NOW, THIS COUNTRY IS A LAUGHINGSTOCK ALL OVER THE WORLD. THEY'RE LAUGHING AT OUR STUPID ELECTIONS.

FIND PATRIOTS NEAR YOU

T.ME/OTBAOFFICIAL
T.ME/OPERATIONTAKEBACKAMERICA
T.ME/OTBAMEDIA

Our government must return to paper ballots for our elections. Then, you would have elections that everybody could be proud of. Because right now, this Country is a laughingstock all over the world.

They're laughing at our stupid elections. Vote in PERSON the day of ELECTION. Don't give them the headcount ahead of time or the chance to cheat this election.

NO MAIL IN BALLOTS and NO DROP OFF BALLOTS!

KEEP SPEAKING UP!
Join the Pushback.

To Volunteer in your State, have a rally/protest/event or to collaborate on projects, reach [redacted] or

(See link here.)

25

Narrative 5: Oregon's 2022 midterm elections were fraudulent.

KATU News ✓ @KATUNews · Dec 11

Oregon is losing its second elections director in as many years with the current one announcing her resignation, saying the job is extremely challenging and citing uncertain funding.

katu.com
Oregon loses 2nd elections director in as many years
Oregon is losing its second elections director in as many years with the current one announcing her resignation, saying the job is extremely …

💬 20   ♻ 3   ♡ 18

Replying to @KATUNews

Maybe she's tired of being accused of a corrupt system. Oregon needs voter reform. If Oregon leads the way to secure voter elections, starting with reform, starting with voter ID, than maybe people will settle down.

8:28 PM · Dec 11, 2022

10 Likes

(See link here.)

I was born and raised in Oregon, and I know without a shadow of doubt, that we didn't vote in @Tina4Oregon nor did we vote in the strictest gun laws in the nation. @ORDems your going down as frauds and cheats. China isn't my Oregon.

2:02 AM · Nov 22, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

90 Retweets   **2** Quote Tweets   **415** Likes

(See link here.)

Threat Alerts

Considering how the treasonous Democrat Party government of Ore...

I think they call that treason. And I don't think banning these people from government is enough. They should be expelled from planet Earth.

👍

02:06 AM

(See link here.)

21 days ago

HANG THEM IN THE SQUARE
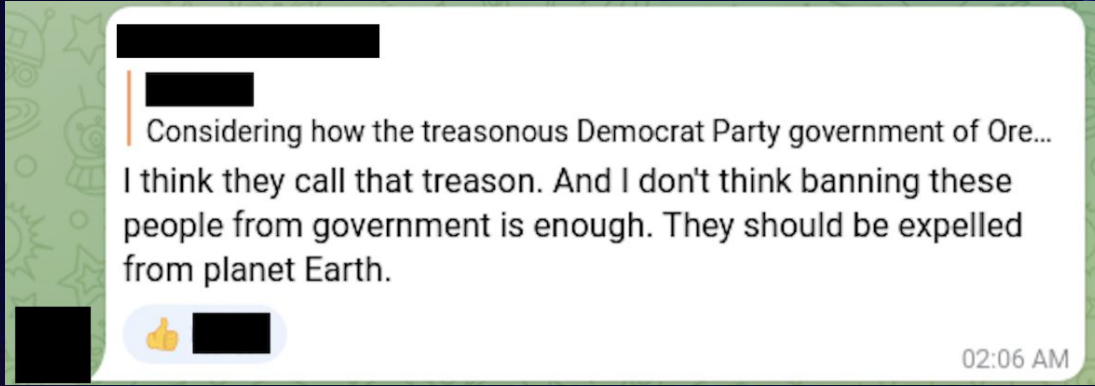
0   0   •   Reply   •   Share ›

(See link here.)

Appendix B: MDM Narratives

MDM Narratives

Narrative	Average Risk Level	% of Reporting Periods Observed	Reporting Period Discovered
Mail-in ballots are used to commit voter and election fraud in Oregon.	High	100%	7/15/22 - 8/12/22
Future elections can't be trusted due to the fraudulent 2020 elections.	High	100%	7/15/22 - 8/12/22
Oregon's 2022 midterm elections were fraudulent.	High	32%	11/4/22 - 11/11/22
Voter and election fraud has been happening in Oregon for decades.	Medium	100%	7/15/22 - 8/12/22

MDM Narratives

Narrative	Average Risk Level	% of Reporting Periods Observed	Reporting Period Discovered
Oregon should eliminate mail-in ballots and hold in-person voting that requires voter ID.	Medium	95%	8/12/22 - 8/19/22
Peoples' votes for POTUS 45 in the 2020 election were not counted.	Medium	5%	8/12/22 - 8/19/22
Twitter is manipulating the 2022 elections by suppressing support for an Oregon candidate for governor.	Medium	11%	9/9/22 - 9/16/22
The US Department of Justice (DOJ) is allowing voter and election fraud.	Medium	11%	9/9/22 - 9/16/22

MDM Narratives

Narrative	Average Risk Level	% of Reporting Periods Observed	Reporting Period Discovered
Oregon's elections are being controlled by out-of-state individuals through campaign donations.	Medium	74%	9/9/22 - 9/16/22
Election officials will use the clear window on mail-in ballot envelopes to commit election fraud.	Medium	16%	10/21/22 - 10/28/22
Oregonians' votes were not counted during the 2022 midterm elections.	Medium	32%	11/4/22 - 11/11/22
The Oregon gubernatorial race was called before all votes were counted.	Medium	16%	11/4/22 - 11/11/22

MDM Narratives

Narrative	Average Risk Level	% of Reporting Periods Observed	Reporting Period Discovered
Delays in counting ballots indicate election fraud.	Medium	32%	11/4/22 - 11/11/22
Oregon Ballot Measure 114 passed via voter and election fraud.	Medium	16%	11/4/22 - 11/11/22
Illegal immigrants are voting.	Low	74%	7/15/22 - 8/12/22
Oregon should conduct a full election audit to prevent widespread election fraud.	Low	53%	7/15/22 - 8/12/22

MDM Narratives

Narrative	Average Risk Level	% of Reporting Periods Observed	Reporting Period Discovered
Twitter will influence the outcome of the 2022 midterm elections by enforcing its Civic Integrity Policy.	Low	5%	7/15/22 - 8/12/22
People should not trust voting machines because they enable election fraud.	Low	89%	8/12/22 - 8/19/22
Voter and election fraud occur through ballot harvesting.	Low	89%	8/12/22 - 8/19/22
Oregon election officials committed fraud by altering voters' registration.	Low	37%	8/12/22 - 8/19/22

MDM Narratives

Narrative	Average Risk Level	% of Reporting Periods Observed	Reporting Period Discovered
Mail-in ballots are used to commit election fraud as non-Oregon residents are voting.	Low	68%	8/12/22 - 8/19/22
Oregon election officials need to update voter rolls to prevent and election fraud.	Low	95%	8/12/22 - 8/19/22
Oregon election officials are not being transparent about the election process.	Low	84%	8/12/22 - 8/19/22
People can vote multiple times via mail-in ballots.	Low	74%	8/12/22 - 8/19/22

MDM Narratives

Narrative	Average Risk Level	% of Reporting Periods Observed	Reporting Period Discovered
People should not trust signature verification because it is ineffective.	Low	68%	8/12/22 - 8/19/22
People are using mail-in ballots received by deceased people in Oregon to commit voter fraud.	Low	68%	8/12/22 - 8/19/22
Allowing same day registration will increase the likelihood of voter and election fraud through mail-in ballots.	Low	5%	8/19/22 - 8/26/22
HB 3291 will open the midterm election to more voter and election fraud.	Low	11%	8/26/22 - 9/2/22

MDM Narratives

Narrative	Average Risk Level	% of Reporting Periods Observed	Reporting Period Discovered
The US Postmaster general should be replaced for mail-in voting to be secure.	Low	58%	8/26/22 - 9/2/22
Allowing formerly incarcerated individuals to vote enables voter and election fraud.	Low	16%	9/2/22 - 9/9/22
Election officials are setting unreasonably high prices to block access to election records.	Low	5%	9/2/22 - 9/9/22
Election officials will commit election fraud to prevent Republican candidates from winning.	Low	63%	9/16/22 - 9/23/22

MDM Narratives

Narrative	Average Risk Level	% of Reporting Periods Observed	Reporting Period Discovered
Oregon's mail-in ballots are not anonymous because they contain QR codes/ unique identifiers.	Low	16%	9/16/22 - 9/23/22
People should monitor drop boxes to prevent voter fraud.	Low	42%	9/16/22 - 9/23/22
Election officials are excluding volunteer poll workers on a partisan basis.	Low	5%	9/23/22 - 9/30/22
Voters should be able to track their ballots.	Low	37%	9/30/22 - 10/7/22

MDM Narratives

Narrative	Average Risk Level	% of Reporting Periods Observed	Reporting Period Discovered
Ineligible voters can register to vote due to the Oregon Motor Voter Act of 2016.	Low	26%	9/30/22 - 10/7/22
People can't trust mail-in ballot drop boxes because they are not secure.	Low	26%	9/30/22 - 10/7/22
Mail-in ballots can't be trusted because they are "error prone."	Low	5%	10/14/22 - 10/21/22
People's ballots are being filled out by others.	Low	16%	10/14/22 - 10/21/22

MDM Narratives

Narrative	Average Risk Level	% of Reporting Periods Observed	Reporting Period Discovered
Oregonians' votes were not counted during previous elections.	Low	11%	10/14/22 - 10/21/22
Accepting ballots that arrive after election day enables voter and election fraud.	Low	16%	10/28/22 - 11/4/22
Oregon should conduct an election audit of the 2022 midterm elections due to widespread voter and election fraud.	Low	11%	10/14/22 - 10/21/22
The number of votes for Oregon gubernatorial candidate Christine Drazan decreased during the ballots counting process.	Low	11%	11/4/22 - 11/11/22

MDM Narratives

Narrative	Average Risk Level	% of Reporting Periods Observed	Reporting Period Discovered
Voting in Oregon is not anonymous.	Low	11%	11/4/22 - 11/11/22
The Oregon Secretary of State's website does not show the official election results.	Low	11%	11/25/22 - 12/2/22

Appendix C: Definitions

Definitions

- **Misinformation** - false, but not created or shared with the intention of causing harm
- **Disinformation** - deliberately created to mislead, harm, or manipulate a person, social group, organization, or country
- **Malinformation** - based on fact, but used out of context to mislead, harm, or manipulate
- **Narrative** - at least more than one piece of content that shares a similar rhetorical objective (ex. County clerks are using mail-in ballots to steal elections)
- **Voter Fraud** - unlawful voting by individuals (ex. voting more than once)
- **Election Fraud** - unlawful actions that undermine election integrity (ex. tampering with official election materials)
- **Threat** - A piece of content that is likely criminal in nature and that any reasonable person would interpret as a real and serious communication of an intent to inflict harm. This content could describe, encourage, suggest, or condone a specific act of violence against a person or property.