

AI and Misinformation – What to know

Threats of misinformation

- The most potentially damaging threat to our democracy is the continued use of misinformation and lies as a political tool to sow seeds of doubt in the election process.
- Foreign authoritarian nations try to hack our elections to make our citizens doubt the outcome and create chaos.
- Now they are joined by countless partisans, grifters, and other opportunists here at home who are more effectively creating the same chaos and doubt by hacking the minds of American citizens.
- The lies being told are so dangerous because democracy requires trust.
 - In the summer of 2020, Detroit-area voters received a robocall that falsely told them voting by mail would lead to their personal information being used to serve warrants and collect outstanding debts.
 - On Election Day morning in 2020, Flint residents received a deceptive robocall that warned them about long lines at polling places and suggested they should wait to vote until Wednesday, Nov. 4.
 - When the operatives involved in these schemes are identified, they are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, which can mean years in prison.
- If we lose faith in our elected officials, the community leaders who step up to work on elections, or if the trust we have in our election processes is fully eroded, democracy is lost.
- Fortunately, we know the best way to combat misinformation is through education and communication. So, we need to get out in front of misinformation and provide the facts.
- In Michigan, we've done this by working to amplify the voices of trusted community leaders and regular people who have served as election workers.
- We make sure they have the facts about our elections and how to vote so they can share accurate, accessible information with their networks.

- Citizens can and should join this effort by:
 - Learning the rules for voting in Michigan, and then sharing what you learn with others.
 - Calling out misinformation when you see it and insisting that we hold people accountable for spreading lies about elections.
 - Remaining engaged in the election process, volunteering as an election worker, and being a truth-teller in your community

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Misinformation on steroids, fueled by unregulated AI, is a very real threat to our election security and integrity.

- Interference from foreign and domestic bad actors is almost guaranteed, as there are strong incentives to disrupt the democratic process in the U.S. right now.
- Americans rely on/trust social media for news, making an easy opening for agents of chaos to use AI to create misinformation on wait times, polling locations, candidate statements, etc.
- Young people increasingly use AI Chat programs as search engines where voting information is fluid and unreliable.
- Without sufficient regulations across both federal and state governments, voters will not have information they need to tell when AI is being used to manipulate images or communications. This leads to fear, confusion, and chaos.

Unregulated AI can have massively disproportionate impacts at the local level.

- AI tools make it easier to mislead voters about voting locations and conditions at those locations, possibly suppressing turnout and discouraging participation.
- These tools pose a particular threat to language-minority voters as they can quickly and easily produce misinformation in different languages.
- Artificial Intelligence could also be used to inappropriately purge voting lists and disenfranchise scores of Americans who have the legal right to vote.

AI could increase threats against elections officials

- We all have a stake in the security of elections workers, who are increasingly targeted.
- AI can flood the zone with attacks or hoaxes that use up time and resources.
- Local volunteers and officials don't ask for the spotlight, but they deserve our protection.

Solutions exist to lessen the threat of AI-fueled misinformation and disruption.

- The federal government should strengthen laws requiring disclosures related to AI-generated election content and stiffen penalties for failures to do.
- A new law was enacted in Michigan in November 2023 that requires political ads generated substantially with AI to include a statement that it was created with AI. Another new law makes distributing deceptive media generated by AI a crime if done to harm a candidate within 90 days of an election by leading voters to falsely believe the candidate engaged in the fake speech or conduct.

Misinformation using AI and our response

- Over the last several years, and since the 2020 election and its aftermath, election administrators, American voters, and American democracy, have been through a lot.
- We've experienced threats and challenges to our democracy and our elections from both foreign and domestic adversaries.
- Disinformation and misinformation have been weaponized to confuse, frustrate, and disenfranchise voters, often specifically targeting communities of color.
- While this misinformation has taken many forms, the newest and potentially most dangerous is the use of artificial intelligence.
- As we enter the 2024 presidential election, we should be concerned about the potential for AI-generated content being used to deliberately mislead voters.

Responding to AI

- Work is already underway among federal, state, and local partners to start to identify potential AI-related threats and ensure we are prepared to fight any attacks on our elections.
- Even though AI technology is new, it uses the same misinformation playbook we've seen during past elections, and we know the best way to combat misinformation is through transparency, education, and communication. So, we need to get out in front of this threat and provide voters with facts and information provided by trusted messengers.
- The importance of having increased community involvement and a large pool of available election workers cannot be overstated.
- With the increased speed at which AI can spread disinformation, we need to identify the truth and get it out there quickly.
- Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson's team has been successful at combating misinformation by working with partners to speak the truth about elections – including local officials, sports teams, business leaders, educators, religious leaders, and other trusted sources.
- It is crucial to make sure they have the facts about our elections and how to vote so they can share accurate information with their networks.
- Secretary Benson's team is committed to maintaining wide open lines of two-way communication to learn from partners, and to hear from clerks what information and resources can be provided to support these efforts.
- For 2024, Secretary Benson has developed a Voter Confidence Council, bringing together trusted leaders from within Michigan communities and experts from her office to answer election questions and share the truth.
- We need prominent community members to serve as stewards of the truth about elections, about the importance of one vote, and help us reach the voters of Michigan with this message.
- If you encounter election misinformation, please report it, with an image if possible, to Misinformation@Michigan.gov.