

The Long Fuse: Misinformation and the 2020 Election | Election Integrity Partnership

By Election Integrity Partnership

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On January 6, 2021, an armed mob stormed the US Capitol to prevent the certification of what they claimed was a “fraudulent election.” Many Americans were shocked, but they needn’t have been. The January 6 insurrection was the culmination of months of online mis- and disinformation directed toward eroding American faith in the 2020 election.

US elections are decentralized: almost 10,000 state and local election offices are primarily responsible for the operation of elections. Dozens of federal agencies support this effort, including the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) within the Department of Homeland Security, the United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC), the FBI, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Defense. However, none of these federal agencies has a focus on, or authority regarding, election misinformation originating from domestic sources within the United States. This limited federal role reveals a critical gap for non-governmental entities to fill. Increasingly pervasive mis- and disinformation, both foreign and domestic, creates an urgent need for collaboration across government, civil society, media, and social media platforms.

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