

ZOE LOFGREN, CALIFORNIA
CHAIRPERSON

JAMIE RASKIN, MARYLAND
G.K. BUTTERFIELD, NORTH CAROLINA
PETE AGUILAR, CALIFORNIA
MARY GAY SCANLON, PENNSYLVANIA
VICE CHAIRPERSON
TERESA LEGER FERNANDEZ, NEW MEXICO

JAMIE FLEET
STAFF DIRECTOR

One Hundred Seventeenth
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

1309 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6157
202-225-2061 | CHA.HOUSE.GOV

RODNEY DAVIS, ILLINOIS
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

BARRY LOUDERMILK, GEORGIA
BRYAN STEIL, WISCONSIN

TIM MONAHAN
MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

May 5, 2022

Lisa Monaco
Deputy Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Deputy Attorney General Monaco:

The U.S. Department of Justice, under the leadership of Attorney General Merrick Garland, has expressed a strong commitment to defending the right to vote, including combatting disinformation and protecting election officials from threats. That commitment has been exemplified by the Justice Department's ongoing commitment to protecting access to the ballot and investigating the insurrection that occurred on January 6, 2021, as well as the creation of the Election Threats Task Force in June of 2021.

All these efforts are critical to ensuring every American is able to participate in our democracy freely and fairly. As members of the Committee on House Administration Subcommittee on Elections, we are concerned about the impact of mis- and disinformation on the ability of voters to cast their ballot free from interference and with accurate information, and the risk that mis- and disinformation poses to election officials. According to a recent poll by the Brennan Center for Justice, 64 percent of election officials said that the spread of false information about elections has made their job more dangerous.¹

As we saw in the 2016, 2018, and 2020 elections, the proliferation of mis- and disinformation has grown at an alarming rate, especially that which is targeted at minority and non-English speaking communities. As evidenced by information the Subcommittee gathered at a recent roundtable in Miami, Florida discussing mis- and disinformation targeted at Spanish-language voters, there is no reason to believe this will stop ahead of the 2022 election. It is important we do more to address mis-and disinformation and its role in threats to election officials before the 2022 election.

As disinformation continues to spread, it is also important for election officials to have a place to turn when they receive threats. The Task Force can help election officials by filling that vital role. A recent poll of election officials conducted by the Brennan Center for Justice found that currently

¹ "Local Election Officials Survey," Brennan Center for Justice, Mar. 10, 2022, *available at* <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/local-election-officials-survey-march-2022> at pg. 12.

only 54 percent of election officials who are threatened because of their jobs reported that threat to law enforcement. Within that group, only 22 percent of election officials reported the threat to federal law enforcement.²

We write to learn more about the work the Justice Department, and the Task Force, is doing to combat the growing threat disinformation poses both to our democracy and to the security of election officials. Specifically, we would like the Department to answer the enclosed questions.

Thank you in advance for your assistance with this matter. We respectfully request your responses by May 20, 2022. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-2061.

Sincerely,



G. K. Butterfield
Chair
Subcommittee on Elections



Pete Aguilar
Member
Subcommittee on Elections



Teresa Leger Fernández
Member
Subcommittee on Elections

cc: The Honorable Zoe Lofgren, Chairperson
Committee on House Administration

The Honorable Darren Soto
Member of Congress, Florida's 9th Congressional District

The Honorable Nanette Barragán
Member of Congress, California's 44th Congressional District

² *Id.* at pg. 7.

QUESTIONS

1. How many threats to election officials have been reported to the Task Force since it was created?
2. The spread of disinformation about election processes and procedures helps to contribute to threats towards election officials.
 - a. How is the Task Force tracking the spread of potentially dangerous disinformation?
 - b. What role is disinformation playing in the threats that have been reported to the Task Force?
 - c. What is the Task Force doing to track the spread of disinformation in languages other than English?
3. On January 21, 2022, the Department of Justice announced its first criminal case brought by the Task Force—a Texas man arrested for allegedly sending threatening election-related communication to government officials. How many pending investigations does the Task Force have?
4. While only 22 percent of election officials that received threats have reported those threats to federal law enforcement, almost 90 percent reported the threats to local law enforcement.
 - a. What is the Task Force doing to connect with local law enforcement and involve them in the Task Force?
 - b. How is the Task Force collecting data from local law enforcement on threats to election officials to identify patterns and common perpetrators?
5. According to a poll conducted by the Brennan Center, 90 percent of election officials polled had not heard of or did not know much about the Justice Department’s Election Threats Task Force. However, after learning about it, 57 percent were somewhat or very confident that it would make them feel safer.³
 - a. How does the Task Force plan on improving their outreach to election officials to ensure they know about the resources the Task Force offers?
 - b. As most of the previous contact the Department of Justice has had with election officials related to the Americans with Disabilities Act related violations, what does the Department of Justice plan to do to improve their relationship with election officials?

³ *Id.* at pg. 23.