

# Election Worker Safety and Privacy

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**Concerns** about election workers' safety and privacy have been reported in [surveys](#), [news articles](#), and congressional hearings from the 2020 elections through the current election cycle. Those concerns, along with a perceived increase in politically motivated job scrutiny, have led [some](#) to [leave](#), or [consider leaving](#), their roles. This Insight provides a brief overview of recent federal activity on election worker safety and privacy.

## Background

Federal law [prohibits](#) certain types of intimidation of or interference with election workers, including [intimidation](#) to discourage serving as a poll watcher or election official or in response to such service; [interference](#) by members of the Armed Forces with election officials' exercise of their duties; and intimidation for helping voters [register](#) or [cast a vote](#). Many states have laws that address other threats to election workers, such as through [privacy protections for election commissioners](#). More general laws, such as prohibitions [against voter intimidation](#) or [harassing](#) or [threatening](#) interstate communications, might also apply to some conduct.

Some [state](#) and local officials have responded to recent reports of threats to election workers with administrative action or legislative proposals. Election officials have included local law enforcement in poll worker trainings, for example, and implemented new security measures in their offices. State legislators have established new prohibitions or protections, such as a [New Hampshire law](#) that prohibits intimidating election officials to interfere with their work and an [Oregon law](#) that extends existing privacy protections to election workers.

## Federal Activity

The executive branch has taken some action on election worker safety and privacy since the 2020 elections. In July 2021, the Department of Justice (DOJ) [announced](#) the creation of an Election Threats Task Force "to address the rise in threats against election workers, administrators, officials, and others associated with the electoral process." DOJ [has reportedly](#) charged 20 individuals and secured 15 convictions related to the task force as of September 2024.

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In addition to enforcement efforts, federal agencies have provided resources and support for election workers. For example, DOJ, the [Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\)](#), and the [Election Assistance Commission \(EAC\)](#) administer certain grant funds that might be used to address threats to election workers. DHS's [Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency](#) also offers [publications and services](#) to help election officials respond to [physical](#) and [online](#) threats; the EAC hosted a [panel](#) on election official security and released a related [web page](#) and [video series](#); and the EAC's [Board of Advisors](#) adopted a [resolution](#) condemning threats against election workers and calling for additional agency resources to help protect them.

There has also been activity on the issue in Congress. Election administrators and other witnesses have addressed threats to election workers in testimony to several congressional committees, including in

- **2021:** [July 28](#), [October 21](#), and [October 26](#);
- **2022:** [January 20](#), [May 19](#), [June 13](#), [June 21](#), [June 22](#), [July 20](#), [July 27](#), [August 3](#) (Senate Judiciary), [August 3](#) (Senate Rules), and [August 11](#);
- **2023:** [March 10](#), [March 23](#), [March 28](#), [April 27](#), [June 7](#) (House), [June 7](#) (Senate), [June 14](#), [September 27](#), [November 1](#), and [December 5](#); and
- **2024:** [March 12](#), and [May 1](#).

In the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, the majority staff of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform released a [report about the effects of election misinformation and disinformation](#), including threats to election workers, that drew on responses from election officials to [letters from the then-chairs of the committee and the Committee on House Administration](#). Some Senators have also written to federal agencies to request [updates](#) or action on threats to election workers, such as a [public service announcement to local law enforcement](#).

Some legislation in the current Congress aims to address election worker security directly, including through proposals to

- prohibit intimidation of election workers with intent to intimidate or to interfere with or retaliate for performance of official duties (H.R. 11/S. 1/S. 2344, S. 1318);
  - prohibit interference with helping voters register, vote, or both (H.R. 11/S. 1/S. 2344, H.R. 1583);
  - prohibit intimidation of or interference with election officials that involves force, violence, or threats of force or violence (S. 4; S. 3912);
  - prohibit intimidation of or interference with election agents, vendors, and contractors (S. 4; S. 3912);
  - prohibit physically damaging or threatening to physically damage election infrastructure with intent to interfere with election administration or vote tabulation or certification (S. 4; S. 3912);
  - extend an [existing prohibition on intimidation](#) to include intimidation for processing or scanning ballots or tabulating, canvassing, or certifying votes (H.R. 11/S. 1/S. 2344, S. 1318, H.R. 3130/S. 1487);
  - prohibit knowing distribution of artificial intelligence-generated media that falsely depicts an election official with intent to intimidate or harass an official (S. 4714);
  - prohibit removal or suspension of local election administrators except for inefficiency, neglect of duty, or malfeasance in office (H.R. 11/S. 1/S. 2344, H.R. 5046/S. 2575);
  - create privacy protections for, or extend [existing privacy protections](#) to, election workers and their families (H.R. 11/S. 1/S. 2344, S. 1318);
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- prohibit possession of unauthorized firearms at federal election sites (H.R. 2471);
- direct the EAC to study state poll worker safety and recruitment programs (H.R. 7413); and
- direct DOJ to provide law enforcement and federal attorneys with training and resources for addressing threats to election workers and assign a special agent to each Federal Bureau of Investigation field office to investigate such threats (S. 1318).

Legislation has also been introduced to authorize funding states might use to address threats to election workers. For example, some Members have proposed funding for protecting election workers (H.R. 5292/S. 630); recruiting and training them (H.R. 11/S. 1 /S. 2344, H.R. 5292/S. 630, S. 1318); supplementing their pay (H.R. 3436/S. 1609); providing them with physical security services and social media threat monitoring (S. 1318); and preventing disclosure of their personal information (S. 1318).

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