



FREEDOM IS FOR
EVERYBODY

To: Interested parties

From: NARAL Pro-Choice America Research Team

Date: October 26, 2022

Abortion Disinformation and Misrepresentations in Four Key Races

As the 2022 midterm elections rapidly approach, it is vital that voters know the truth about abortion care and where candidates stand on reproductive freedom. Politicians and candidates across the country have [worked overtime](#) to spread [disinformation](#) about abortion and [hide](#) their [extreme views](#) from the public who overwhelmingly support keeping abortion legal and accessible. The Women's Disinformation Defense Project (WDDP) combats racist and sexist disinformation and has zeroed in on several frontline races where women candidates have been targeted by these tactics, as well as inundated with [abortion-related disinformation](#). Candidates Tudor Dixon (MI-Gov), Adam Laxalt (NV-Sen), Ted Budd (NC-Sen), and Senator Marco Rubio (FL-Sen) hold dangerous views on reproductive freedom and abortion access that pose a threat to voters in these key states and nationwide.

These candidates have attempted to [soften their rhetoric](#), pretend abortion isn't a key issue, [downright lie about their opponents](#), and mask their own anti-choice views and records. Despite their work to [downplay](#) and [distract](#) from their true agenda for power and control, freedom to access reproductive care, including abortion, is on the ballot in November. Voters in North Carolina, Michigan, Nevada, and Florida deserve to know where the candidates stand on abortion and the consequences of electing anti-choice candidates now that *Roe* has been overturned. We need to communicate clearly with voters about the stakes of this moment, the motivations of those who brought us here, and the harm that real people will experience as a result of the extreme views of anti-choice politicians. We must ensure Val Demings, Catherine Cortez-Masto, Cheri Beasley, and Gretchen Whitmer are in office where they will work to protect reproductive freedom and abortion access for their constituents.

Abortion Disinformation in the 2022 Midterms

Since the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*, anti-choice candidates and politicians are working to capitalize on the [confusion](#) and deflect attention from the [realities of this extreme decision](#) and its [cruel](#) impacts. Disinformation and fearmongering about the safety of abortion care and the implications of abortion bans have been rampant this election cycle as anti-choice politicians try to justify their [harmful](#) bans. Our movement must mobilize to combat these misleading narratives and inoculate against disinformation. Employing these key strategies will be vital in combating disinformation and ensuring voters get the information they need:

- **Do not engage with or repost disinformation**
- **Repeat & amplify accurate information**
- **Inoculate voters and help them identify disinformation**
- **Define the villains and their motivation for power and control**
- **Shift the narrative to freedom**



FREEDOM IS FOR
EVERYBODY

Florida Senate Election—Marco Rubio

Throughout his tenure in the U.S. Senate, Sen. Marco Rubio has [consistently voted](#) against abortion access and reproductive freedom. He recently commented that the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* was “[long overdue](#)” and claimed it was never constitutional to begin with. In a [statement](#) released after the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization (JWHO)*, Rubio said the decision would give “state legislatures around the country, along with the federal government, the ability to enact policies that protect the life of unborn Americans.” His statement signals what we have long known to be true: Despite their attempts to deny it, Republicans in Congress will work to pass a national ban on abortion.

In the aftermath of the *JWHO* decision, Rubio was quick [to claim](#) that based on the outcry from voters “you think abortion has been banned [...] nothing has been banned.” Despite these claims that the *JWHO* decision would return power to the states, Rubio has already [co-sponsored](#) Sen. Lindsey Graham’s national abortion ban and [defended](#) Florida’s 15-week ban that has no exceptions for rape or incest. Rubio has even acknowledged that his position in favor of total bans with no exceptions for rape, incest, or human trafficking was “[not a majority position](#).”

Politicians like Sen. Rubio know their position is unpopular and out of step with the vast majority of voters, so he has relied on spreading disinformation in order to justify his extreme position. Rubio consistently makes false claims that the Republican position is reasonable and that Democrats want “[taxpayer funded abortion without restriction up to the moment of birth](#).” Voters must ignore Rubio’s attempts to distract from his true agenda to ban abortion nationally and support reproductive freedom champion Val Demings in this year’s midterm elections.

Michigan Gubernatorial Election—Tudor Dixon

After *Roe* was overturned, eliminating the federal right to abortion, it has become more important than ever to have advocates for reproductive freedom in leadership at the state level. Gubernatorial candidate Tudor Dixon’s has made clear that her views on abortion are too extreme for voters in Michigan. Dixon said she was a “[a pro-life candidate no exceptions](#)” and would not support exceptions for rape, incest, or life of the mother. When pressed about carve outs for the life and health of the mother, Dixon [doubled down](#) saying “[no exceptions](#).” Dixon also committed to reinstating Michigan’s 1931 law banning abortion when *Roe* was overturned. Dixon even [made the argument](#) that abortion should be outlawed because abortion access would create “a safe haven for any type of predator out there” and having access to reproductive care would embolden and enable further abuse. Dixon argued that access to medication abortion would mean abusers could hide their victim’s pregnancies with little scrutiny. “There are dangers with these things. We can’t let traffickers or predators have these pills that hide that there is a child,” Dixon [said](#).

Dixon has also stoked and amplified disinformation about abortion in an attempt to discredit her opponent, Governor Gretchen Whitmer. Dixon falsely claimed that Democrats would allow “[abortion on demand](#)” and that Whitmer “[supports abortion up until the moment of birth, an](#)



FREEDOM IS FOR
EVERYBODY

[extreme policy found only in China and North Korea](#).” Lying about Whitmer’s record and using medically inaccurate and inflammatory terms like “[late-term abortion](#)” are all a part of Dixon’s plan to deflect and distract from her own extreme views.

Despite taking such an extreme position on abortion access, Dixon is now attempting to downplay her ability to restrict or ban abortion if she were elected governor and said “[it shouldn’t be an issue for the gubernatorial race](#).” Dixon has flip-flopped on the issue, and had previously [said](#) she would consider some exceptions for the health of the mother. Dixon clearly knows her anti-choice position is not in line with Michigan voters, and is working to foster confusion about her views and shift the conversation away from her plans if she were elected governor.

Nevada Senate Race—Adam Laxalt

Candidate for Nevada Senate, Adam Laxalt, is [too extreme](#) for Nevada and in the wake of the *JWHO* decision, he has made abundantly clear that his views are not aligned with Nevada voters. After the initial leak of the Supreme Court’s decision that signaled the court would overturn *Roe*, [Laxalt said](#) “*Roe v. Wade* was always a joke. It was a total, complete invention.” Laxalt [also said](#) that *Roe* was a “historic error” and lamented that it was “[sad](#)” that Nevada did not have stricter anti-abortion policies. Laxalt tried to downplay his remarks in an attempt to soften his extreme views and claimed that it was simply “[a shorthand way of saying](#)” that *Roe* was unconstitutional.

Laxalt even [indicated](#) he would support a referendum to pass a 13-week abortion ban and [claimed](#) that the policy was “much more in line with the vast majority of Nevadans, in contrast to Senator Masto’s vote to make aborting babies legal all the way up to live birth.” Laxalt also [falsely asserted](#) that Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto supported abortions “without limitations” and after fetal viability. In a [disinformation-laden tweet](#), Laxalt went as far as saying “abortion extremists like @CortezMasto shamelessly advocate for late-term and taxpayer-funded abortions, and have even opposed giving healthcare to born-alive survivors.” He also [falsely claimed](#) that abortion was “state-sanctioned infanticide, and Senator Cortez Masto is openly endorsing it.” Laxalt knows his own position on abortion is too extreme for Nevada and is instead using disinformation and lies to distract from his agenda.

Though Laxalt has repeatedly asserted that abortion policy should be left up to the states, he has avoided answering questions on whether he would support a national ban if he were elected to the U.S. Senate. Laxalt [said](#) that “for it to be returned to the states is an important process” and added that “I think this needs to go to the states.” Despite these claims, Laxalt has [declined](#) on many occasions to comment on whether he would support Sen. Lindsey Graham’s proposed national abortion ban. Laxalt’s campaign [did not respond](#) to comments from the press when asked about his support for a federal abortion ban and is following the wider GOP strategy to avoid discussions on abortion since the overturning of *Roe*. Laxalt [commented](#) that Sen. Cortez Masto was focusing too much on abortion, in an apparent attempt to move the conversation away from his anti-choice views. Laxalt even [ran away](#) from a reporter asking about his stance on a federal abortion ban. It is clear Laxalt will do anything to deflect from his



FREEDOM IS FOR
EVERYBODY

extreme views on abortion and instead he has worked to change the narrative and spread disinformation about his opponent.

North Carolina Senate Election—Rep. Ted Budd

Though Rep. Ted Budd has long been an extremist when it comes to abortion as a member of the U.S. House, Budd has now set his sights on a U.S. Senate seat. Rep. Budd has consistently [voted](#) against reproductive freedom and holds views that are out of step with North Carolinians. Amidst politicians moving to ban abortion nationwide after the fall of *Roe*, Budd [co-sponsored](#) a House version of Sen. Graham's [federal abortion ban](#). Budd has [repeatedly](#) stated that he opposes abortion exceptions in cases of rape, incest, and for the life of the mother.

Budd even co-sponsored a bill from Rep. Steve King that would [effectively ban](#) abortion at 6-weeks, once a fetal heartbeat could be detected. Budd was also one of the 29 co-sponsors of H.R. 877, the Sanctity of Human Life Act, which sought to establish that life begins at fertilization or cloning and that from conception "[every human being shall have all the legal and constitutional attributes and privileges of personhood.](#)"

Given his extreme views on abortion, it is no surprise that Rep. Budd has moved to spread disinformation about abortion and his opponent Cheri Beasley. Budd recently [tweeted](#) "Beasley wants abortion legal at any time, for any reason, at your expense. That is wildly out-of-step with NC." He knows his own views are too regressive for North Carolina voters, so he has moved to mischaracterize Beasley's position and fearmonger about abortion care instead. Budd also previously made the medically inaccurate and [inflammatory claim](#) that "babies who survive an abortion are still denied medical care. That is immoral and just plain wrong." Rep. Budd knows his views are not aligned with North Carolina voters and he is doing everything he can to lie about abortion care and attack his opponent. North Carolina voters need to see through these attacks and elect a true reproductive freedom advocate, Cheri Beasley.

The 2022 Midterms and Beyond

The November 2022 election is one of the first opportunities since *Roe* was overturned this summer for voters nationwide to weigh in and show their overwhelming support for reproductive freedom. The stakes for this year's midterm elections are too high to let rampant disinformation go unchecked. It is crucial our movement leverages all of its resources to call out anti-choice politicians for their lies and fearmongering about their opponents, their own positions on abortion, and abortion care more broadly. Abortion is a vote driver and we must ensure voters have the information they need in a landscape clouded by disinformation in the 2022 election and beyond.