

Trump Administration Escalates Election Meddling by Seizing 2020 Voting Records in Georgia

All who care about election integrity should demand answers about the FBI's unprecedented raid of Fulton County election offices.



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Last week, the FBI raided election offices in Fulton County, Georgia, to seize reams of sensitive voting records from 2020. It was an extraordinary escalation in the administration's campaign to discredit the 2020 election results and lay the groundwork for interference in future elections.

The administration's conduct in Fulton County was unprecedented. I am aware of no other instance of the federal government directly interfering in state election administration and confiscating original election records. We now also know that Trump ordered Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard to go to Fulton

County and orchestrate a call between the president and the agents on the ground — a highly unusual and inappropriate move that raises serious concerns about political interference in law enforcement and elections. And Monday, on former FBI deputy director Dan Bongino’s podcast, President Trump [called](#) [\[link-1\]](#) for Republicans to “nationalize” elections and “take over the voting . . . in at least . . . 15 places.”

We don’t yet know the administration’s justification for the raid in Fulton County, but there are multiple reasons to be skeptical — and alarmed.

First, there is the election denial context. For years, President Trump and his allies have pushed lies about the 2020 election, many of them centered on Georgia. The state was a focal point of Trump’s bid to overturn the results — recall Trump asking Secretary of State

Brad Raffensperger to “find” 11,780 votes. But false claims of a “stolen” election have been thoroughly debunked in multiple court cases, by multiple recounts and audits, as well as by independent experts and top officials in Trump’s first administration.

Second, the Georgia raid comes amid the administration’s [broader campaign](#) [\[link-2\]](#) to lay the foundation to take over or undermine future elections. One element of that campaign is the [attempt](#) [\[link-3\]](#) to stockpile nearly every state’s unredacted voter rolls, which include confidential personal information such as driver’s license and partial Social Security numbers and voter history. Beyond the privacy and security risks, this is concerning because Trump officials could, for example, [manipulate](#) [\[link-4\]](#) this voter data to support false claims of widespread voter fraud, pressure

states to aggressively purge their voter rolls, or justify more serious efforts to meddle in election administration.

Most states, including Georgia, have refused to hand over sensitive voter information, in part because of privacy laws. The Justice

Department has [sued](#) [\[link-5\]](#)

Georgia and more than 20 other states to get these files. There's no decision yet in the Georgia case, but two federal courts have already ruled that the administration is not entitled to state voter data.

Assuming that the FBI got everything it sought this week, however, it now has the Fulton County voter rolls, at least through 2020.

Third, the Georgia raid comes amid a broader context of abuse of federal law enforcement authorities. This administration has a track record of weaponizing law enforcement against its opponents

and perceived enemies — former FBI director James Comey, New York Attorney General Letitia James, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, and more. The Fulton County elections board has long been a favored retribution target.

Last month, *The Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) [\[link-6\]](#) that Trump was pressuring Attorney General Pam Bondi to move more aggressively against his foes, including those involved in the 2020 election. So the timing of this raid is likely not coincidental, especially given that the Comey and James indictments came swiftly after Trump's [previous public pressuring](#) [\[link-7\]](#) of Bondi.

Even if this FBI investigation in Georgia is eventually shut down by the courts, that doesn't mean it's not dangerous. Even if it's shown to have been baseless, it will fan the flames of election conspiracy theories. The resurgence of

misinformation could fuel further attacks on elections and erode public trust.

This raid can also lend momentum to the administration's [election interference plans](#) [link-8]. Last March, for example, Trump issued a sweeping executive order aiming to force an [array of changes](#) [link-9] to election rules and practices nationwide. So far, three federal courts have rejected this attempt to seize control and rewrite election policies. (The Brennan Center [is counsel](#) [link-10] in one of those cases.) That's because the Constitution grants the states authority to regulate elections, subject to laws passed by Congress. The president has no role, and for good reason. It would be dangerous to centralize control over national elections in a single partisan official with a personal stake in the outcomes. The FBI's unprecedented actions in Georgia look like another

attempt to muscle past those limits.

Then there's a darker possibility. The seizure of Georgia's records could be a practice run for the more extreme step of federal officials trying to access voting machines or ballots during upcoming elections. If the FBI is now claiming authority to take election materials under the guise of fraud investigations, it's not hard to imagine it trying to do so while the 2026 midterm votes are being counted. Trump demanded as much in 2020, and his then-attorney general rejected that as unlawful. But the current attorney general and other administration officials might be more pliant and ready to do whatever Trump asks, regardless of what the law says.

Lest you dismiss that as catastrophizing, note that Trump [just called](#) [link-11] for Republicans to take over elections. He posted on social media last August that "the

States are merely an ‘agent’ for the Federal Government in counting and tabulating the votes. They must do what the Federal Government, as represented by the President of the United States, tells them.” He got it exactly backwards: The president has no legitimate role in counting and tabulating ballots.

The Georgia raid also signals a sharp escalation of efforts to intimidate election officials. These officials already face a deluge of threats and harassment for doing their jobs. The repeated threats to use law enforcement to investigate, prosecute, and put pressure on election officials and others involved in elections is [another key element](#) [link-12] of the administration’s election interference campaign. Turning the power of federal law enforcement against election officials sends a message: Defy the president at your peril. Even if the law prevents the president from directly interfering

in elections, fear can do this work indirectly.

So, what needs to happen now?

First, the public deserves a clear explanation for this extraordinary federal intrusion into the state machinery of elections, as well as for the unusual involvement of the director of national intelligence in the effort. Georgia lawmakers requested as much in a [letter](#) [link-13] to Bondi on Tuesday. And courts need to scrutinize the legitimacy of the FBI’s Fulton County search warrant, the justification for its unusual seizure of original materials rather than just copies, as well as the security and privacy of election materials while in federal hands. (Indeed, the county [asked a federal court](#) [link-14] on Wednesday to require the FBI to return the original ballots and election materials.)

More fundamentally, we should demand an immediate end to the

Trump administration's election interference campaign. Just because the president is trying to grab power over elections doesn't

mean he will succeed. But given his relentlessness and all the levers of power at his disposal, it will be up to all of us to ensure that he doesn't.

PART OF

Trump Administration's Campaign to Undermine Elections ▶ [\[link-15\]](#)

MORE ON

[Election Integrity](#) [\[link-16\]](#)

[Georgia](#) [\[link-17\]](#)

Links

link-1: called <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/02/us/politics/trump-nationalize-elections.html>

link-2: broader campaign <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/trump-administrations-campaign-undermine-next-election>

link-3: attempt <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/tracker-justice-department-requests-voter-information>

link-4: manipulate <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/what-expect-next-trump-administrations-strategy-meddle-vote>

link-5: sued <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/trump-administration-has-sued-more-20-states-refusing-turn-over-voter>

link-6: reported [https://www.wsj.com/politics/policy/trump-has-complained-about-pam-bondi-repeatedly-to-aides-fd424df3?](https://www.wsj.com/politics/policy/trump-has-complained-about-pam-bondi-repeatedly-to-aides-fd424df3?reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink)
[reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink](https://www.wsj.com/politics/policy/trump-has-complained-about-pam-bondi-repeatedly-to-aides-fd424df3?reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink)

link-7: previous public pressuring <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/20/us/politics/trump-justice-department-us-attorneys.html>

link-8: election interference plans <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/trump-administrations-campaign-undermine-next-election>

link-9: array of changes <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/presidents-executive-order-elections-explained>

link-10: is counsel <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/court-cases/league-women-voters-v-trump>

link-11: just called <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/03/us/politics/trump-save-act-elections.html>

link-12: another key element <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/whats-next-elections-under-project-2025-agenda>

link-13: letter <https://www.warnock.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/02.03.2026-Letter-to-AG-Bondi-re-Fulton-County-FBI-Search-copy.pdf?inline=1>

link-14: asked a federal court [https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/04/us/politics/fulton-county-fbi-raid-trump-gabbard.html?](https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/04/us/politics/fulton-county-fbi-raid-trump-gabbard.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share)
[smid=nytcore-ios-share](https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/04/us/politics/fulton-county-fbi-raid-trump-gabbard.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share)

link-15: Trump Administration's Campaign to Undermine Elections </series/trump-administrations-campaign-undermine-elections>

link-16: Election Integrity <https://www.brennancenter.org/topics/voting-elections/election-integrity>

link-17: Georgia </tags/georgia>