

ANALYSIS

Bondi Links Minneapolis Violence to Voter Data

The attorney general laid bare the administration's plan to interfere with the midterms.



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[Voting & Elections](#)

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The nation has been convulsed by the shooting of Alex Pretti in Minneapolis. Millions now see with sickening clarity a lawless assault by federal officers on an American city and its people. As *The Wall*

Street Journal editorialized, it is a "moral and political debacle for the Trump presidency."

The videos were followed by a [fusillade of lies](#) [\[link-2\]](#) from senior government officials. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said Pretti had engaged in "domestic terrorism." White House aide Stephen Miller called Pretti an "assassin" who tried to "murder

federal agents.” Border official Gregory Bovino declared, “This looks like a situation where an individual wanted to do maximum damage and massacre law enforcement.” The instant impulse by these high officials was to bully and smear.

Another outrageous statement by a cabinet official has not gotten enough attention.

On Saturday, Attorney General Pam Bondi [wrote](#) [\[link-3\]](#) to Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz linking the violence in Minneapolis to a demand that the state give the Justice Department complete access to the state’s sensitive voter rolls, among other things. There’s no explicit quid pro quo offered — but anyone familiar with Grade B gangster movies won’t miss the implication. Certainly that’s how state officials have read it. Let that sink in: Federal agents have killed innocent civilians in cold blood. And the response of the

attorney general of the United States is to use it as leverage to illegally access voter data. That is an unambiguous abuse of power.

As my colleague Wendy Weiser has [written](#) [\[link-4\]](#), “What do voter rolls have to do with ICE? Nothing. But they have a lot to do with the administration’s ongoing efforts to meddle in elections.”

Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon provided Bondi with the only legal and responsible answer (a simple “[no](#) [\[link-5\]](#)”), describing her offer as “an apparent ransom.”

Make no mistake: The federal government has no authorization to demand confidential voter information from the states. In our constitutional system, states are responsible for maintaining and protecting voter rolls. Indeed, various state and federal laws limit how much data the federal government can collect.

But that hasn't stopped it from trying. Bondi's Justice Department has [demanded access](#) [link-6] to the voter records of 44 states and Washington, DC, and it has sued more than 20 states for not complying. Two courts have already ruled on the side of the states.

Why would the administration want to Hoover up this data? It would give election deniers new ammunition to push false claims of voting by people who are not U.S. citizens. It would help the federal government pressure states into reckless voter purges, which would kick eligible citizens off the rolls just as November rolls around.

Plainly, it's all part of a broader strategy to meddle with our elections. Last weekend, House Majority Leader Steve Scalise said Republicans are looking into yet another version of the unpopular SAVE Act — the bill that would require American citizens to

produce a birth certificate, passport, or similar document to register to vote. At least 21 million Americans lack ready access to those documents, according to our research. The bill narrowly passed the House but stalled in the Senate last year after massive public pushback.

Bondi's letter is a gross escalation of this effort — an explicit abuse of this moment to coerce Minnesota to step into line.

Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT) worries that this escalation is by design. Over the weekend, he warned that the “Trump administration is creating this mayhem, particularly in cities in swing states, in order to take control of the election.”

When Donald Trump took office the first time in 2017, he talked of “American carnage.” Shooting of bystanders, squads of masked armed men, terrorized immigrants, clouds of tear gas, vague claims of

conspiracy, and more — all bring that “carnage” to life. That sense of crisis, consciously instigated, can create opportunities to undermine the election and sow doubt and division.

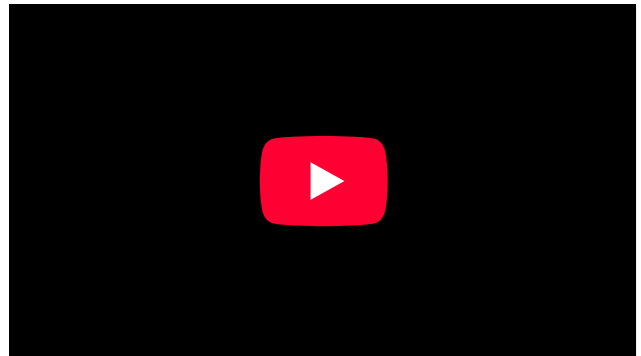
To be clear (and I get asked this a lot): Donald Trump cannot cancel the midterms. Presidents have no power to do that.

But this armed assault on a major American city, coupled with a thuggish offer implying that the bully boys might be pulled back if state officials will betray their voters, shows the damage that can be done nonetheless.

The dignified and angry public response from around the country

to the latest killing suggests maybe something has snapped. It would not be the first time in our history that government violence kindled an even more powerful reaction.

It’s not only the safety and sanity of people in Minnesota that’s at stake. As we are reminded once again, our democracy is on the line.



YouTube video player [\[link-7\]](#)

Links

link-1: here [https://go.brennancenter.org/briefing?](https://go.brennancenter.org/briefing?cid=7013s000000a0ZIAAY&ms=EML_mainsite_general&utm_medium=WEB&utm_source=mainsite&utm_content=general)

[cid=7013s000000a0ZIAAY&ms=EML_mainsite_general&utm_medium=WEB&utm_source=mainsite&utm_content=general](https://go.brennancenter.org/briefing?cid=7013s000000a0ZIAAY&ms=EML_mainsite_general&utm_medium=WEB&utm_source=mainsite&utm_content=general)

link-2: fusillade of lies <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/25/us/politics/trump-administration-minneapolis-shooting-response.html>

link-3: wrote <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2026/01/24/us/pam-bondi-walz-doc.html>

link-4: written <https://x.com/wendyrweiser/status/2015556539537293397?s=46&t=HdGxQq9RTzVhYNnRxyFHg>

link-5: no <https://talkingpointsmemo.com/news/minnesota-sos-rejects-bondis-ransom-request-for-voter-data-in-exchange-for-end-to-chaos>

link-6: demanded access <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/tracker-justice-department-requests-voter-information>

link-7: YouTube video player <https://www.youtube.com/embed/DmQ5ldQgLvU?si=uyNESukxG3B6CuTS>