



# Analysis of Donald Trump's Big Lie

*Important Facts for Every American Who Wants to Help Save Democracy*

October 2022

*By Union Volunteers Ralph Neas, Anthony Essaye, and Alexander Vanderklipp*

Immediately after it became [clear](#) in early November, 2020 that Donald Trump had lost the Presidential election, he invoked his “Big Lie”: that the election had been stolen from him through massive electoral fraud.

Under our democratic system, candidates can challenge election results and can do so vigorously. But our system also requires that such contentions be supported by proof. While Trump and some of his supporters have continuously sought to produce meaningful evidence in support of their contention of massive fraud, they have totally failed to do so. The following is an outline of these failed efforts and of other information reflecting the falsity of this stolen election narrative.

- Shortly after the election, in the context of claims of massive fraud by Trump supporters, election officials in the swing states of [Arizona](#), [Georgia](#), [Michigan](#), [Nevada](#), [Pennsylvania](#) and [Wisconsin](#) conducted a variety of recounts and other electoral reviews. In every instance these state officials—Republicans and Democrats—concluded that there was no basis to support these claims.
- Also shortly after the election, Trump's legal team and other Trump supporters brought more than sixty lawsuits seeking judicial intervention to overturn the election results, based primarily on allegations of fraud. [Sixty-one](#) of these legal actions failed, and the one success involved a legal interpretation that did not involve fraud. Even judges who had been nominated by Trump were highly critical of the paucity of the evidence presented.
- During this period, the leaders of Trump's Justice Department also completely [rejected](#) his fraud claims. In late November of 2020, Attorney General William Barr stated that no widespread fraud had occurred in the election and later elaborated that, at his

request, the Justice Department and the FBI had investigated these claims and found [no supporting evidence](#). Thereafter, his successor Acting Attorney General Jeffery Rosen, along with Acting Deputy Attorney General Richard Donoghue, also rejected Trump's contentions of fraud, with Donoghue [reviewing each claim with Trump](#) and explaining why it was unfounded. Subsequently, Rosen and Donoghue [refused](#) to sign a letter sought by Trump in which the Department would have informed the Georgia legislature that it had identified significant concerns with the election results. They further informed Trump that they and virtually all of the other senior officials at the Department would [resign](#) if such a letter were nonetheless issued.

- Also in November 2020, the U.S Government agency charged with protection of the electoral process, the Cyber Security and Infrastructure Agency, issued a [statement](#) saying that the 2020 election "was the most secure in American history" and that there "is no evidence that any voting system deleted or lost votes, changed votes, or was in any way compromised." The then-head of the agency, a Republican, has since staunchly maintained this position.
- In December 2020, the Republican Governors of Arizona and Georgia—along with the Democratic Governors of the four other swing states—certified the Biden electors in their states, signifying their rejection of Trump's claims. And not long thereafter, the Republican Secretary of State in Georgia refused to comply with Trump's request that he [find an additional 11,780 Trump votes](#) in order to give Trump a victory in that state.
- Faced with these various defeats, Trump and his fellow Big Lie proponents turned to the idea of using so-called "audits" of election results sponsored by Republican-controlled state legislatures, which would be designed to try to establish that the election was stolen from Trump by election fraud in each of these states. Again, this has been an [entirely unsuccessful effort](#).
- The principal such audit began in April 2021, when the Arizona Republican Senate Majority initiated an audit of the state's largest county, Maricopa, which had voted in favor of Biden. The State Senate Republicans removed any sense of non-partisanship by hiring a company named Cyber Ninjas with no [relevant experience](#) and headed by an individual who had been playing a [highly active role](#) in promoting the Big Lie. But after six months of trying to find fraud and failing to do so, the Cyber Ninjas announced that, even according to their dubious recount, Biden had won Maricopa County by 360 more votes than had been reported by election officials.
- The Cyber Ninjas included in their report a list of alleged irregularities on the part of county election officials which they contended may have affected the results, but these have been [fully rebutted by the County's Board of Supervisors](#), most of whom are Republicans, [by the County Recorder](#), another Republican who shares election oversight with the Supervisors, and by [independent election audit experts](#) and [others](#).

- Elsewhere, in June of 2021, the Oversight Committee of the Republican majority Michigan State Senate issued a [report](#) on its investigation of the 2020 election results in that state. After examining numerous allegations made by Big Lie proponents, the Committee found [no evidence of fraud](#) or other unlawful actions.
- Similarly, in October 2021, the non-partisan Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau issued a [report](#) on the Presidential election in that state, which had been commissioned by the Republican-controlled legislature. Its report found no meaningful fraud, citing that out of the 3.3 million votes cast, four people may have voted twice and eleven may have had their absentee votes counted even though they died before Election Day. And in December 2021, the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty, a conservative organization that also reviewed the state's election results, [found no evidence of widespread fraud](#).
- Nonetheless, the Republican controlled legislature in Wisconsin proceeded with another review, headed by a former state Supreme Court Justice, Michael Gableman, who has made clear his [bias](#) in favor of the Big Lie, including visiting with Trump and [receiving his praise](#). As in Arizona, this initiative has been unable to find fraud and instead has focused on making unfounded allegations about the conduct of Wisconsin election officials. In a [rebuttal document](#), the Wisconsin officials have demonstrated the falsity of each allegation, based either on Gableman's lack of knowledge of election procedures or his factual mistakes. Subsequently, Gableman was [dismissed](#) by the Wisconsin Republican Assembly Leader who had appointed him, after characterizing him as an "embarrassment."
- Moreover, some Big Lie proponents launched another claim: that in many states won by Trump, his winning margin was significantly under-counted due to manipulations of voting equipment by outside forces. After review, Republican state officials in various "red" states, including [Alabama](#), [Idaho](#), [Ohio](#), [Oklahoma](#), [Nebraska](#) and [Utah](#), have totally rejected this contention.
- Most recently, Trump supporters have tried another approach: the production of a purported documentary film entitled *2000 Mules* which contends that certain nonprofit organizations paid some 2000 individuals to deposit false ballots in ballot deposit boxes in swing states. The film has been produced by right-wing activists with a past history of making [misstatements](#) and [unfounded claims of voting fraud](#). While it uses cellphone tracking data and deposit box surveillance film as a basis for its allegations, it fails to identify a single person allegedly involved in this activity. In fact, when the Georgia Bureau of Investigations was able to identify three such persons in Atlanta by their car license plates, it determined that all three were [simply depositing legitimate ballots](#) on behalf of themselves and their family members, as permitted under Georgia election law. In short, the film is a deceptive concoction that has been [fully rebutted](#) by electronic data and election experts and has had its premise characterized by Trump's former Attorney General William Barr as "[indefensible](#)."

As this outline reflects, for a more than year and a half Donald Trump and his fellow Big Lie proponents have been trying to find evidence of massive fraud that would support his allegations, and this initiative has completely failed. In fact, these efforts have served to further demonstrate the total lack of justification for the dangerous attack on the integrity of our electoral system that the Big Lie represents.

Indeed, the thousands of dedicated election workers and officials who made the 2020 election such a success despite the difficult conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic deserve the thanks of all Americans.

---

**Ralph G. Neas** is the president and CEO of RGN Strategies. Prior positions include: Former senior counsel on voting rights for the Century Foundation; Executive Director of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, the “Lobbying Arm of the Civil Rights Movement”; president and CEO of People For the American Way; president and CEO of the National Coalition on Health Care; chief legislative assistant to Republican senators Edward W. Brooke and David Durenberger; teaching positions at the University of Chicago Law School, Georgetown University Law Center, Harvard University’s Institute of Politics, and most recently, the University of Southern California’s Center for the Political Future. Mr. Neas is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and the University of Chicago Law School.

**Anthony Essaye** is the co-founder of the International Senior Lawyers Project, which enlists experienced lawyers in developed countries to help support equitable economic progress and the rule of law in the developing world. Prior positions include: U.S. Infantry officer, Deputy General Counsel of the Peace Corps; managing partner of the Paris and Washington offices of the law firm Rogers & Wells, subsequently merged with the law firm Clifford Chance; counsel to the Washington Post in the Pentagon Papers case; and chair of the Democratic National Committee’s National Lawyers Council. He is an alumnus of Georgetown University and Harvard Law School.

**Alexander Vanderklipp** is a researcher in the fields of elections and election administration. Currently, he serves as a fellow with Election Reformers Network, where he assists in the development of policies to reduce the impact of partisanship on election administration. Mr. Vanderklipp has also contracted on projects with The Century Foundation, Keep Our Republic, and Unite America. He is involved in the Youth Franchise Coalition’s ongoing efforts to document the history and legacy of the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Mr. Vanderklipp is a graduate of the University of Michigan.

--

For an outline of further information in rebuttal of the *2000 Mules* film prepared by the authors of this document, see: “[Analysis of the Pseudo-Documentary Film 2000 Mules.](#)”

For a more detailed analysis of Donald Trump’s failed efforts to establish fraud in the 2020 election prepared by eight distinguished conservatives, see: “[Lost, Not Stolen: the Conservative Case that Trump Lost and Biden Won the 2020 Presidential Election.](#)”

**The following are earlier commentaries on Donald Trump's Big Lie in which the authors of this document participated.**

- July 1, 2021: [\*How the Arizona Senate Audit in Maricopa County Is an Assault on Voting Rights\*](#)
- July 30, 2021: [\*Another Month of Chaos for the Arizona Senate Audit in Maricopa County\*](#)
- August 12, 2021: [\*Public Disclosure Is Badly Needed in the Arizona Election Audit\*](#)
- September 27, 2021: [\*The Truth Behind the Results of the Maricopa County Election Audit\*](#)
- December 1, 2021: [\*The First Anniversary of Donald Trump's Big Lie\*](#)