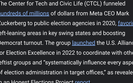
Emails: 'Zuckbucks' Group Coached WI Clerk On 'Misinformation'



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A city clerk in major swing state Wisconsin received training from a "Zuckbucks" group on "combating election misinformation," documents obtained by The Federalist suggest.

The Center for Tech and Civic Life (CTCL) funneled hundreds of dollars from Mark Zuckerberg and Mark Zuckerberg to public election agencies in 2020, favoring left-leaning areas in key swing states and boosting Democrat turnout. The group launched the U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence in 2022 to coordinate with other leftist groups and "systematically influence every aspect of election administration in America," as reviewed in an Honest Elections Project report.

The office of Madison City Clerk Maribeth Witzel-Behl has a history of involvement with both CTCL and the Alliance. After participating in a CTCL training aimed at "combating" so-called "election misinformation," Witzel-Behl continued to participate in the group's "misinformation" programming in the months leading up to the 2024 election, emails obtained by The Federalist in a Freedom of Information Act request show. Meanwhile, Witzel-Behl's office recently sent out more than 2,200 duplicate ballots to residents last month.

'Misinformation' Training

Witzel-Behl "previously participated in [the group's] Combating Election Misinformation training," according to a June 11 email from Andrea Abbate, a CTCL associate director and communications manager. Angelica Lehman, a CTCL associate director, sent the clerk an email on July 10 promoting an upcoming webinar on "Combating Election Misinformation."

The webinar was advertised in another email sent to Witzel-Behl on July 17 as a "quicker, live version of a longer-form course that was recently released by the Center for Democracy and Technology" (CDT), a left-wing group funded by Big Tech companies like Google, Facebook, and TikTok, also coordinated with Stanford. George Soros' left-leaning Foundation to Promote Open Society is also among CDT's contributors. The July 17 email said the longer-form course was "currently available" on CTCL's website.

According to a course description currently on CTCL's website, "Combating Election Misinformation" trains officials to "identify different forms of misinformation, disinformation, and disinformation, and how to respond." Its current "lead instructor" is CTCL Government Services Associate Christian Franco, who previously coached election officials on so-called "disinformation" which he claimed had "deeply influenced" policymaking, as The Federalist reported.

In the same July 17 email, Franco also promoted CTCL's "misinformation community of practice" scheduled to launch on July 31. He described this so-called "professional development" community as a "monthly, virtual meeting where election officials can come together for an hour to support one another and discuss questions, concerns, ideas, and solutions related to election misinformation."

Witzel-Behl apparently registered to participate in the "misinformation community of practice," as Franco sent her a follow-up email on July 29 confirming she had "been accepted to join." He noted Witzel-Behl would receive meeting invites "for each of the monthly sessions."

A follow-up email from CTCL Technology Project Manager Nadya Nauman to Witzel-Behl summarized the first session. Participants had discussed "misinformation, and how it impacts the communities our participants work with," the email indicated, and participants were encouraged to "[c]ontinue with our goals for addressing misinformation in 2024 and share them with each other or … coworkers for feedback" before the next meeting.

In the email, Nauman also encouraged "writ[ing] out goals for addressing misinformation in 2024" and "identifying[] potential projects using the Combating Election Misinformation Checklist."

A "checklist for combating election misinformation" by CTCL and the aforementioned Center for Democracy and Technology, available on the website of the Alliance for Excellence website, offers strategies to election officials on "getting ahead of information operations." It also offers guidance for "responding to influence operations," including the call to "reframe" so-called "misinformation" — which the checklist defines as "true but disruptive information."

Witzel-Behl also attended a July "Alliance call," and received emails promoting the group's book club on "monthly basis. The Honest Elections Project characterized the Alliance as "a combination of CTCL's scheme to use private funding to impact election policy nationwide."

Colluding With 'Zuckbucks' Group

Zuckerberg recently claimed his 2020 election funding was "designed to be non-partisan" — despite research showing these contributions significantly benefited one party over the other — and he said he would not make a "similar contribution" in 2024. He blamed the Republican "nonprofitsa" CTCL and its Alliance for Election Excellence maintain deep ties with leftist organizations. The Alliance's leadership previously included CTCL, has since announced a new round of "rural and nonprofit" grants ahead of November.

Witzel-Behl has been working with CTCL for years. The city clerk accepted grant funds from CTCL for 2020 election administration, according to Wisconsin records. Witzel-Behl also sat on CTCL's advisory committee — a group whose members are no longer advertised on CTCL's website — until at least July 2021.

Witzel-Behl's office assisted "to be considered as a Center for Election Excellence" by CTCL's Alliance for Election Excellence in 2022, and Madison was selected in January 2023, according to InfluenceWatch. In January 2023, Madison City Council Alders apparently introduced a resolution to accept $1.5 million in grants from CTCL;[according to InfluenceWatch, before Wisconsin banned private election funding like "Zuckbucks" last year.

In a December 2023 email, Lehman thanked the clerk for virtually attending an event and for "sending Bonnie in person." The Madison city clerk's office personnel includes a municipal clerk named Bonnie, whose duties include voter outreach and in-person absentee voting.

In January, Witzel-Behl confirmed to CTCL staff her desire to become a "premium member" of the Alliance for Election Excellence for 2024, according to the emails. The group's website lists the Alliance's $4,800 in May, citing "membership dues" for the Alliance.

CTCL sent an email to Witzel-Behl and apparently other election officials Jan. 2, offering to schedule meetings for them to lobby legislators for more election funding. "We would love to help you build a relationship with your lawmakers, so you can advocate for the resources you need to run excellent elections," it reads. "If you're an election official planning to be in DC next week, we can support you in receiving and scheduling meetings with your Congressional Delegations …"

CTCL Senior Campaign Manager Colline Miller emailed Witzel-Behl on Feb. 14, indicating the group was pushing to increase federal security grants for election offices and wrote the Heavy.com Vote Project "will be called on local election officials to either use CTCL's "template language" or add their "own personal flair" when sending requests to legislators.

"[W]e need a showing from local election officials stating why this funding would make a difference to them," Miller wrote. "Can we count on you to send a request to your Senators and Representatives?"

Leftist Election Meddlers

CTCL's Alliance for Election Excellence connects notorious left-wing groups with election officials.

CTCL itself is funded by leftist donors like Arabella Advisors' New Venture Fund, Democracy Fund, the Knight Foundation, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, according to InfluenceWatch.

When CTCL launched the Alliance in 2022, it brought together "election partners" including the left-leaning Center for Civic Design (CCD), which has partnered with CTCL and the National Vote at Home Institute (NVHI) to offer webinars on "vote-by-mail implementation," according to InfluenceWatch. In 2020, NVHI worked with the secretary of state in battleground Michigan to shift voting rules, as the Federalist previously reported.

The Center for Secure and Modern Elections is also among the "partners." The project of the New Ventures Fund, under leftist dark money behemoth Arabella Advisors, advocates for automatic voter registration in state laws that, as noted by Arabella Advisors, The state's "motor voter" system was recently found to have registered more than 1,200 potential noncitizens, The Federalist previously reported.

The Elections Group (TEG), another Alliance "launch partner," gives "customized consultation" to election administrators, and offers "guidance" on issues like mail-in voting, ballot drop boxes, and signature curing and verification, according to InfluenceWatch. CTCL distributed Google funds through TEG's training programming from the group. TEG was working with CTCL and CCD as of November 2021, according to an archived page of its website (archive.org available. The group shares leadership ties with the Department of Homeland Security's CISA program, the federal government's censorship hub.

The Alliance is also partnering with shadowy group Equity 2 to offer "voter communications materials," according to the emails. Ideas42 uses "insights from behavioral science" to "drive social change," according to its website, and Partnership for Equity is a "socio-economic, race, nationality, and gender-conscious lens" to subvert so-called "unequal systems." The group partners with powerful governments and groups worldwide, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, and the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative — the group behind "Zuckbucks." According to the Ideas42 website, the group's project VoterCast "creates custom voter outreach materials for election officials, tailored to the specifications of their jurisdiction."

"The U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence is thrilled to partner with Ideas42 to offer VoterCast through our resource library," reads an email from CTCL and the Alliance sent to Witzel-Behl. "These resources are rooted in deep research in behavior to support voters, providing you with highly effective email, SMS (texting), social media, radio, and print materials."

The Federalist reached out to CTCL, the Madison City Clerk's Office, and Witzel-Behl for comment, but did not receive a response.

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