

Beyond the Ballot: How the Kremlin Works to Undermine the U.S. Justice System

Presented by Suzanne Spaulding | September 2020

Overview and Key Points

- **This briefing focuses on Russian information operations, but other countries are engaged in similar activities, as are domestic voices.**
- **Information operations exploit weaknesses and vulnerabilities of our own making.**
- **Reform advocates seek improvements. Malicious actors seek to weaken democracy.**

Election Interference

Activities in the 2016 Election:

- Propaganda
- Voter registration databases
- Hack and leak of emails

Cyber Threats to the Courts

- Hack and leak sensitive court documents
- Alter data
- Prevent access to information

The “Lisa” Case



Twin Falls, Idaho

The New York Times Magazine



FEATURE

How Fake News Turned a Small Town Upside Down

At the height of the 2016 election, exaggerated reports of a juvenile sex crime brought a media maelstrom to Twin Falls — one the Idaho city still hasn't recovered from.


Main Avenue East in Twin Falls, Idaho. Harris Mizrahi for The New York Times

Twin Falls, Idaho



RedLANews
@RedLANews



 Follow

Three Syrian refugees rape girl at knifepoint in Idaho. Liberals still want accept refugees? #WorldRefugeeDay
<https://t.co/GIjBpHuBKI>

 Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More

... - Embed this Tweet






PatriotRaphael
@PatriotRaphael



 Follow

Don't forget, Obama-appointed U.S. attorney for Idaho, Wendy Olson, also threatened to prosecute Idahoans who spoke out about this crime....
<https://t.co/b6dn6wJbVT>

 Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More

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Secured Borders (Twin Falls, Idaho)



AUG
27

Citizens before refugees

Public · Hosted by [Secured Borders](#)

Barenaked Islam



The 3 Propaganda Channels



Different "Justice" System for Black, Poor and Non-White America

 **BleepThePolice**
@BleepThePolice

The American (in)justice system does not need a few tweaks, but it needs to be completely overhauled.

Narrative Frames

These frames are used to challenge the independence and impartiality of the U.S. Justice System

- The justice system tolerates protects, and covers up crimes committed by **immigrants**
- The justice system operationalizes the institutionally racist and corrupt **police state**
- The justice system directly supports and enables **corporate corruption**
- The justice system is a tool of the **political elite**

Attacks on 9th Circuit District Judge



Tennessee GOP
@TEN_GOP

It's sad and pathetic that Judge Robart puts his personal ideological preferences over safety of American citizens. 'Judge in Seattle'

Reply Retweet Favorite More

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Texas Lone Star
@SouthLoneStar

"RETWEET if you think that Judge James Robart is the swamp that Trump must drain! #9thCircuit #MuslimBan"

Reply Retweet Favorite More

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Kate Steinle



AmConVoice
@AmConVoice



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Kate Steinle's killer was found NOT GUILTY! So he "accidentally" shot her with an illegal firearm ABSOLUTELY SICKENING STOP protecting illegal, criminal aliens and start protecting AMERICANS.

← Reply ↺ Retweet ★ Favorite ⋮ More

1:17 PM - 1 Dec 17 · Embed this Tweet



FightToResist
@FightToResist



Follow

Honestly #KateSteinle verdict is a failure of justice system Just like it was failure before when cops who murdered black people get acquitted. This is the truth - our justice system has failed us many times and it still broken! It's not an immigrants fault!

← Reply ↺ Retweet ★ Favorite ⋮ More

3:05PM - 1 Dec 17 · Embed this Tweet

3:05PM - 1 Dec 17 · Embed this Tweet


← Reply ↺ Retweet ★ Favorite ⋮ More

1:17 PM

Playing To Both Sides

BM Sponsored · [Like Page](#)

For one guilty cop we got two murder cops who will walk free. That's not how justice should work #AltonSterling



Officers Won't Be Charged In Fatal Shooting Of Alton Sterling | BlackMattersUS.com

The Justice Department will not charge the two police officers involved in fatal shooting of Alton Sterling

[BLACKMATTERSUS.COM](#) [Learn More](#)

260 Reactions 42 Comments 118 Shares

[Like](#) [Comment](#) [Share](#)

Heart of Texas shared their event. Sponsored · [Like Page](#)

Five police officers were killed in an organized attack during the protest in Dallas this



JUL 10 **Blue Lives Matter**
Sun 2 PM - Belo Garden Park - Dallas, TX, Unite...
369 people interested · 42 people going [★ Interested](#)

2.1K Reactions 65 Comments

[Like](#) [Comment](#)

BM shared their event. Sponsored · 🌐

In 1986, Jerome Smith was sentenced to life in prison for a crime he didn't commit. The prosecutor hid key evidence that goes to the heart of Jerome's innocence until 2001, 15 years after the trial. No jury ever saw or heard that evidence. Jerome's attorneys were unable to prepare properly which hindered their defense.

HELP BRING JEROME HOME! ATTEND HIS JUVENILE SENTENCING HEARING!... See More




OCT 14 Free Jerome "Skee" Smith
Fri 8:30 AM · Orleans Parish Criminal District Co...
72 people interested · 20 people going

★ Interested

45 Reactions

👍 Like 💬 Comment



RT JUSTICE IN THE U.S.

BEIJING 08:29 FOR MORE ON THESE STORIES VISIT WWW.RT.COM

2:29 / 3:11

ⓘ RT is funded in whole or in part by the Russian government. [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org)

Look who profits from police brutality

NEW ORLEANS JUDGE ORDERED TO RELEASE 7 MURDERERS AND RAPISTS



WHILE THOUSAND OF BLACK BROTHERS ARE SPENDING THEIR LIVES IN PRISON FOR MINOR VIOLATIONS

 **BLACKTIVISTS**
@BLACKTIVISTS

Maybe the criminal justice system from start to finish is seriously racist? The government is blind and deaf

SPUTNIK

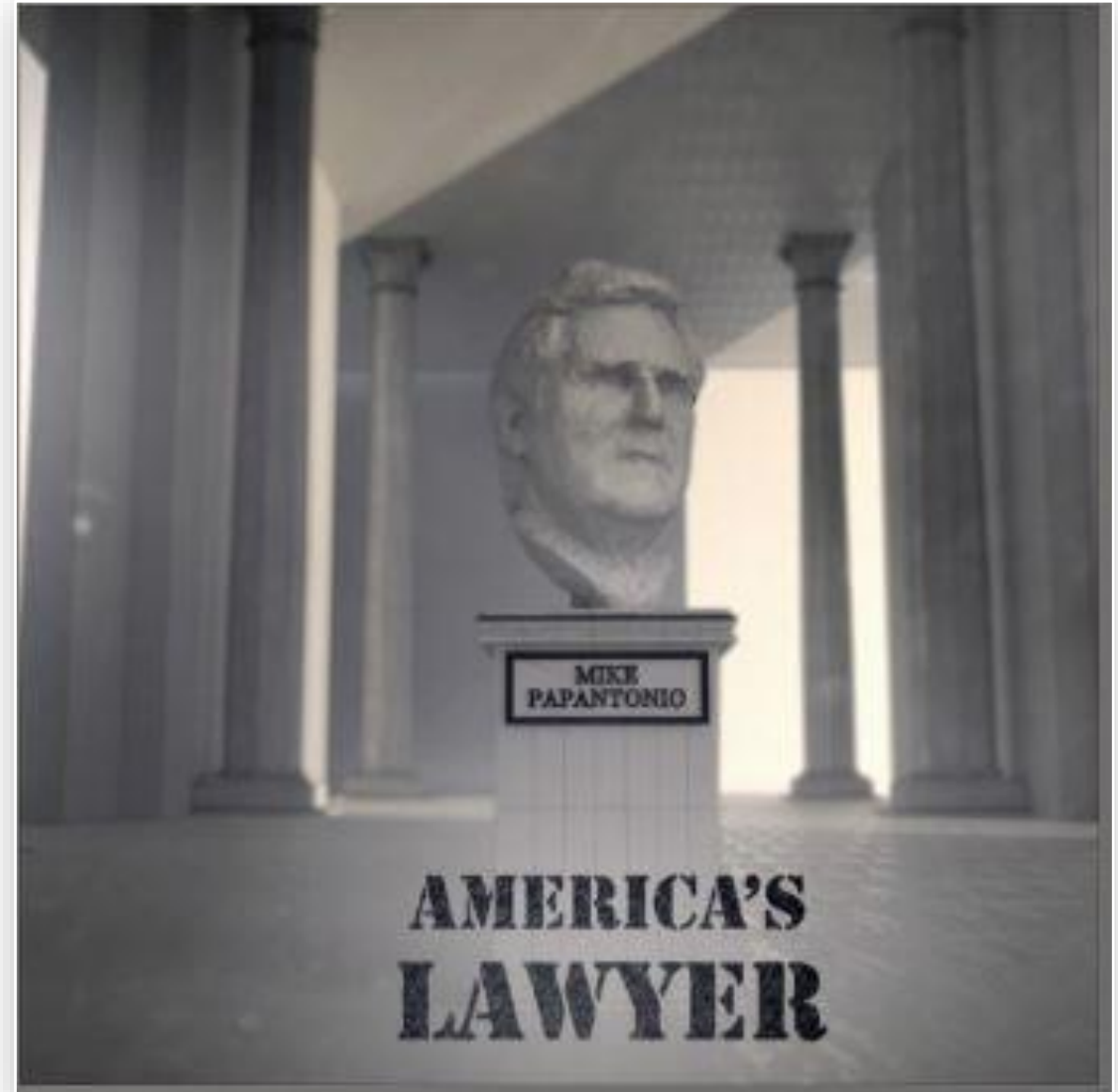
LOUD & CLEAR



US Prisons Are the Crime: A Cesspool of Violence and Corruption

America's Lawyer (RT Program)

“...to say that the justice system in the United States is broken would be a gross understatement. Corporations and corrupt politicians have taken control, turning the once impartial judiciary into a tool for the elite to use for their own gain.”

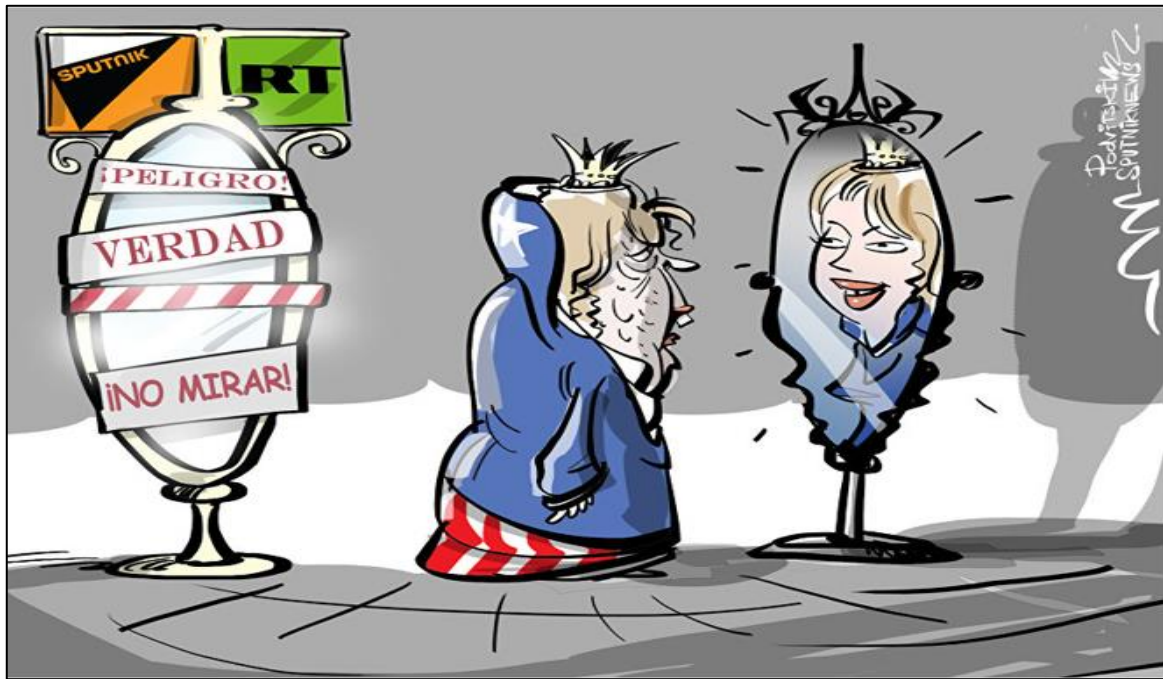


America's Lawyer (RT Program)





<https://trofire.com/2018/12/04/corporate-war-hawks-push-for-cold-war-with-russia/>



<https://mundo.sputniknews.com/caricaturas/201811281083761426-eeuu-acusa-a-medios-rusos-de-decir-verdad/>

RT becomes target for calling out flaws in the US justice system

Published time: 27 Dec, 2018 08:30

Edited time: 27 Dec, 2018 08:39



<https://trofire.com/2018/12/04/corporate-war-hawks-push-for-cold-war-with-russia/>

Putin's View of the American Justice System

“The United States stripped Russia of the right to use our property, which is a clear violation of Russia’s property rights,” Putin told reporters in China. “So, to begin with, I will ask our Foreign Ministry to file a lawsuit. We will see how effectively the much-lauded American judicial system works.”

Joel Gehrke, “Vladimir Putin’s lawsuit threat dismissed by State Department,” *Washington Examiner*, September 5, 2017

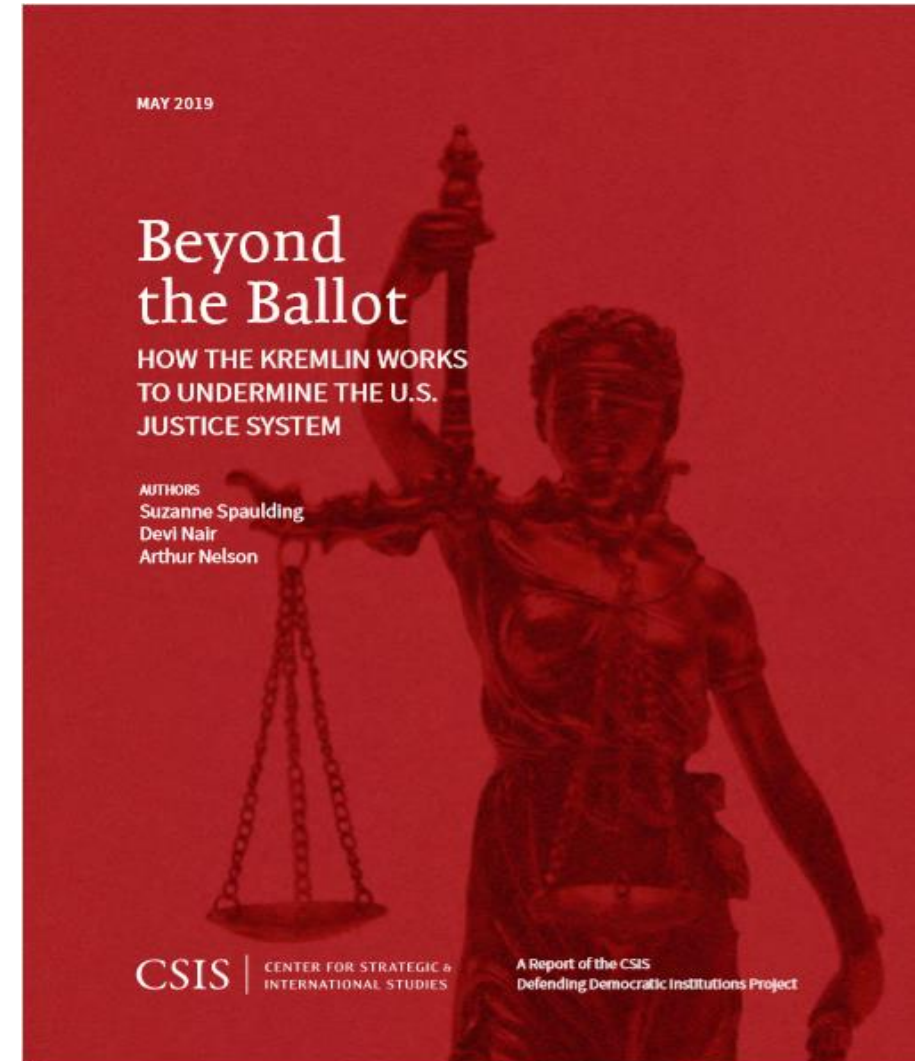
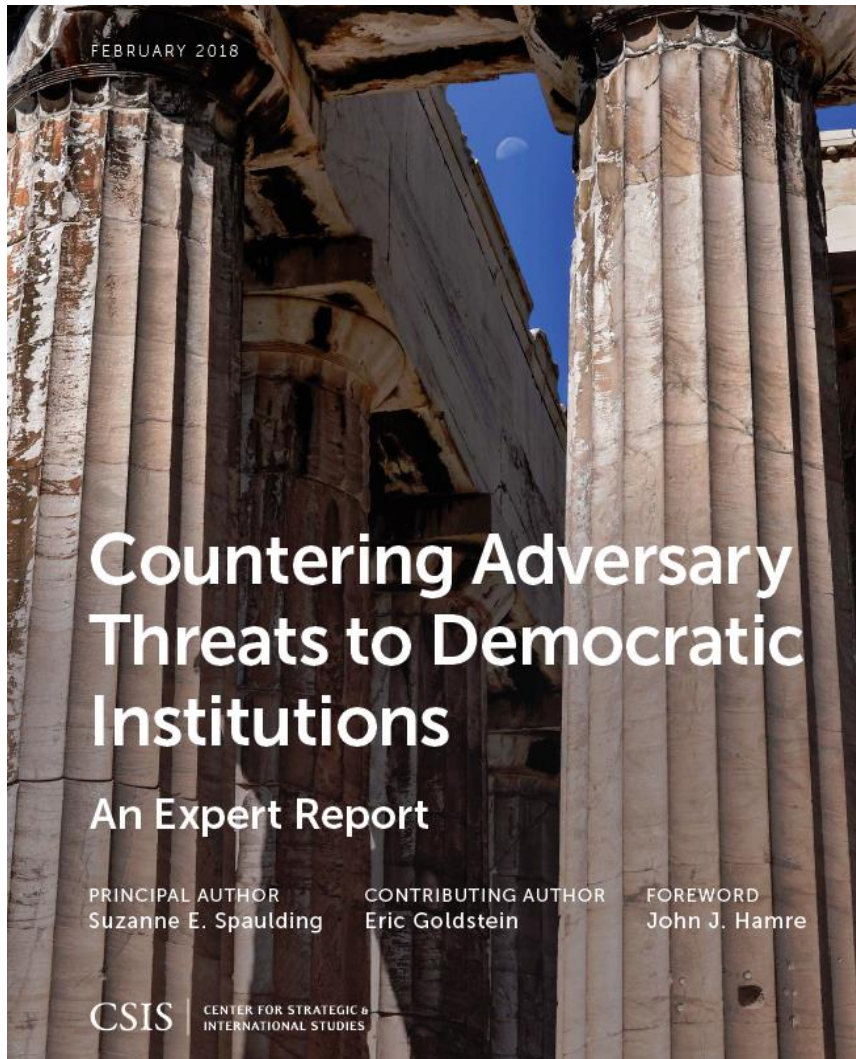


FBI Warns of Continued Russian Interference

“What has pretty much continued unabated is the use of social media, fake news, propaganda, false personas, etc. to spin us up, pit us against each other, to sow divisiveness and discord, to undermine America’s faith in democracy... That is not just an election-cycle threat. It is pretty much a 365-day-a-year threat.”

FBI Director Christopher Wray, F.B.I. Warns of Russian Interference in 2020 Race and Boosts Counterintelligence Operations -
The New York Times

DDI Reports



DDI Lines of Effort

- **Continued research and awareness raising**
- **Cybersecurity and disinformation training for judges and courts**
- **Rapid Response & Education Network**
- **The promotion of civics as a national security imperative**

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Brunswick Playbook Overview

Playbook priorities include:

1

Steps that courts should take to build resilience before an event

2

Identifying the right team and response plan

3

Creating response options and messaging based on best practices

Key Takeaways During Brunswick Playbook Discussions:

- It is critical **to train for and test responses ahead of time** in order to lead confidently through an incident
- **Robust civic education** can help equip citizens to withstand disinformation narratives
- When responding to disinformation, **lead with facts and avoid repeating the disinformation** in your communications
- **Establish relationships with key stakeholders** (media, local advocacy groups, etc.) ahead of time to ensure they have a baseline understanding of how your court works and what it values.
- **Speak plainly** when communicating with the public and media. Avoid legal jargon.

Chief Justice's 2019 Year-End Report

“...we have come to take democracy for granted, and civic education has fallen by the wayside. In our age, when social media can instantly spread rumor and false information on a grand scale, the public’s need to understand our government, and the protections it provides, is ever more vital. The judiciary has an important role to play in civic education.”

**DEFEND DEMOCRACY:
CHANGE YOUR PASSWORD**

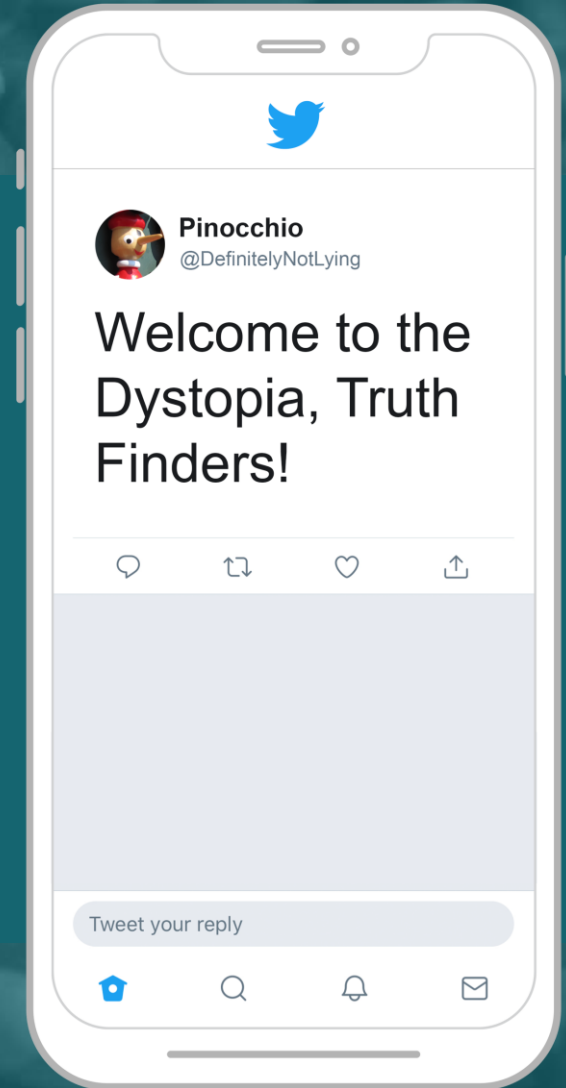
For more information, please visit:

www.csis.org

In the search bar, filter by ‘**program**’ and look up
‘Defending Democratic Institutions’

Countering Disinformation:

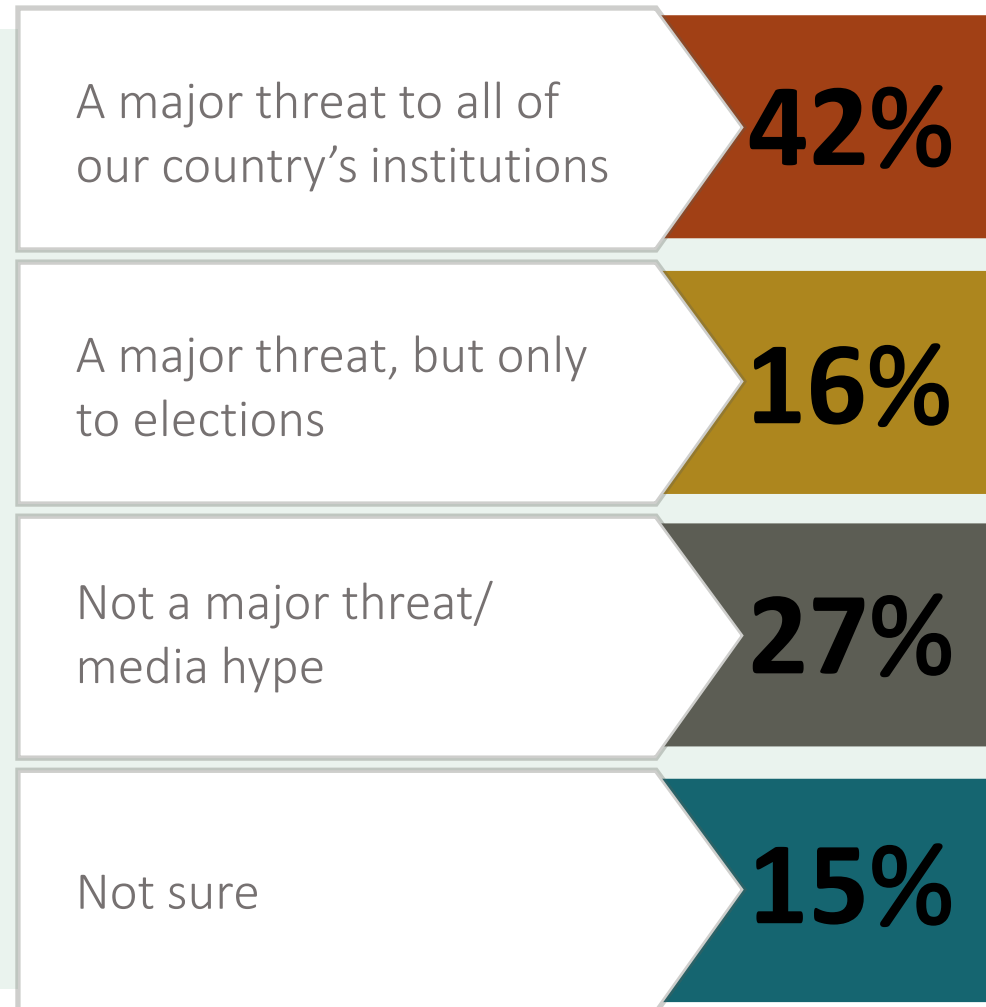
Lessons From Focus Groups and Surveys



September 2020

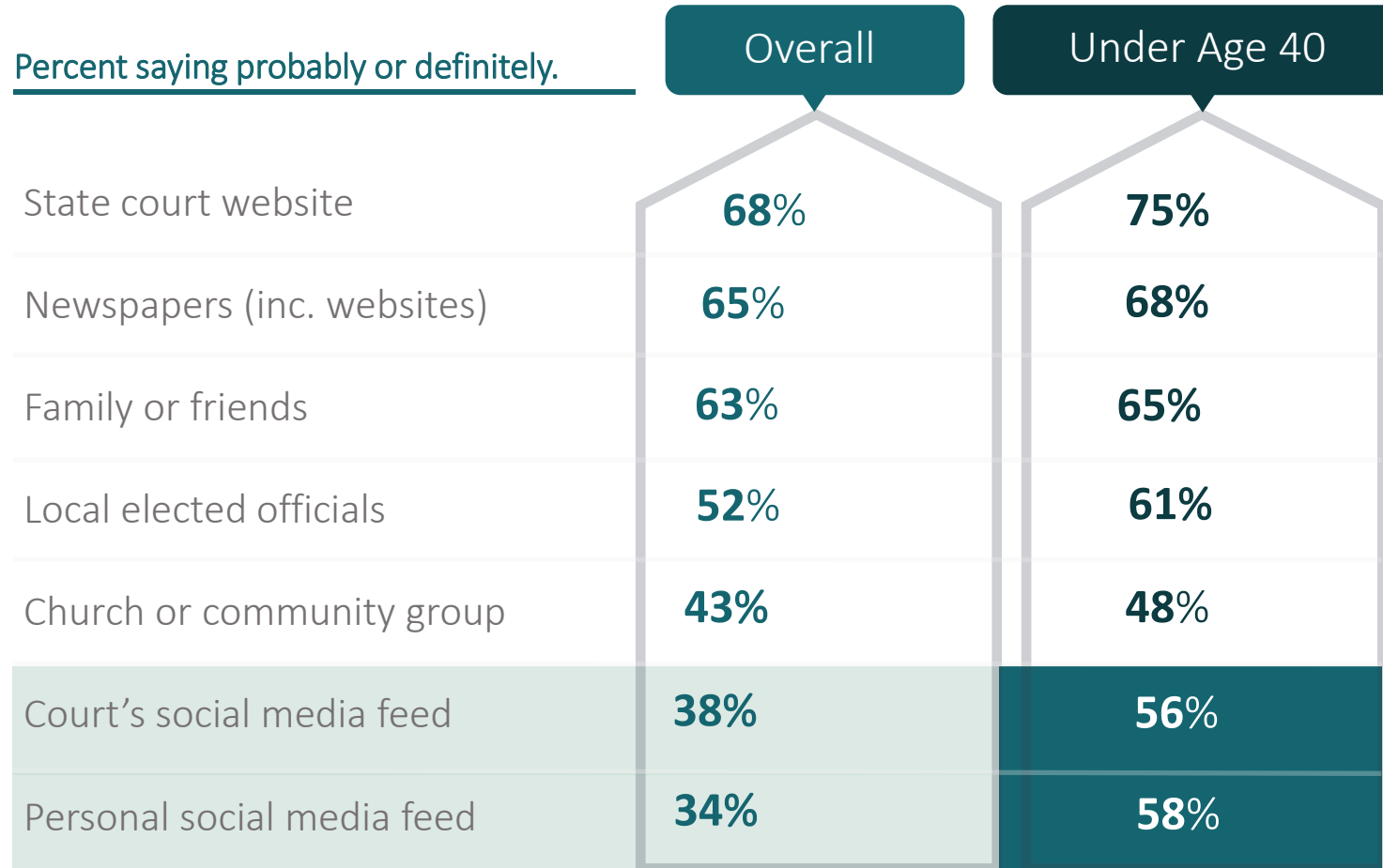
Jesse Rutledge, NCSC | jrutledge@ncsc.org

Q: “Which of the following statements comes closest to your understanding about this issue?”



For those with a college degree, and those over age 50, **this number rises to 48%**

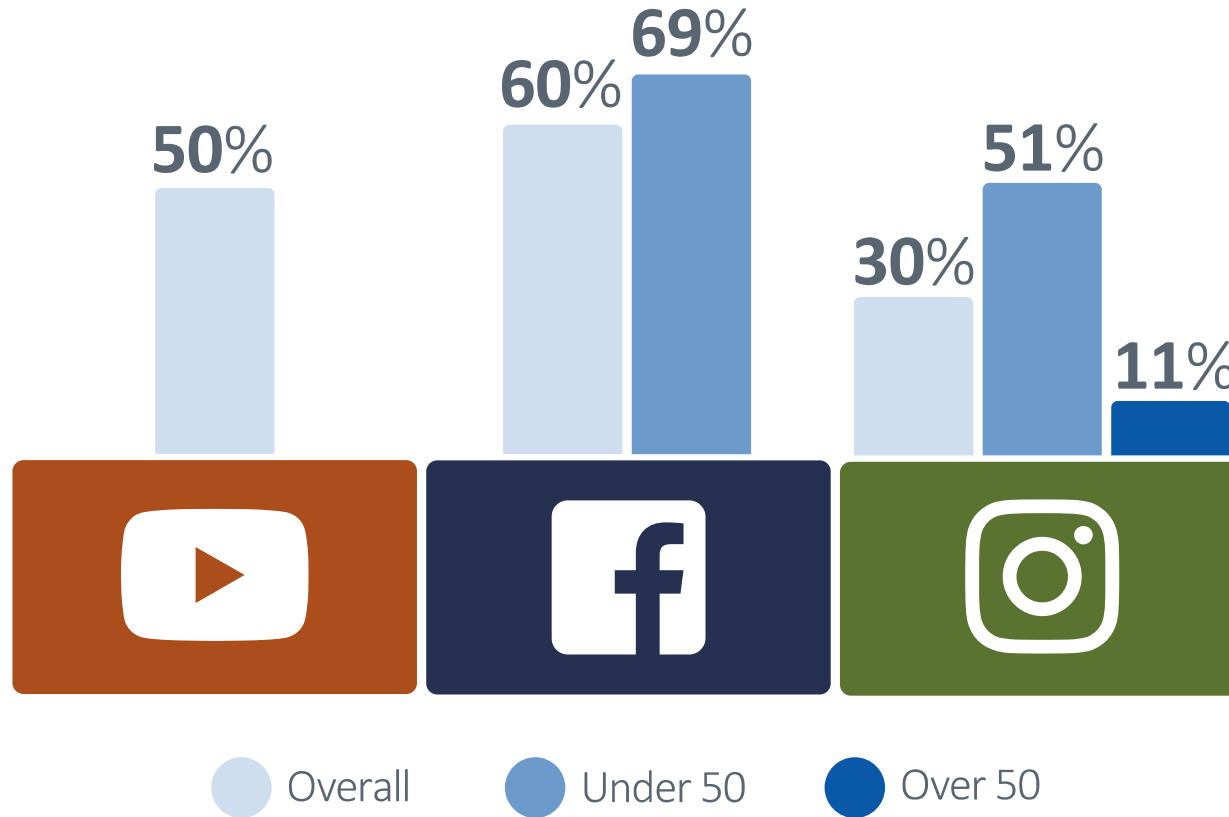
Q: “If you were looking for more information on the state courts, how likely would you be to turn to each of the following?”



Social media usage **varies by platform**—and by other **demographic characteristics**.

Q: “How often do you use each of the following social media platforms?”

Percentage saying they use this social media platform daily or weekly.



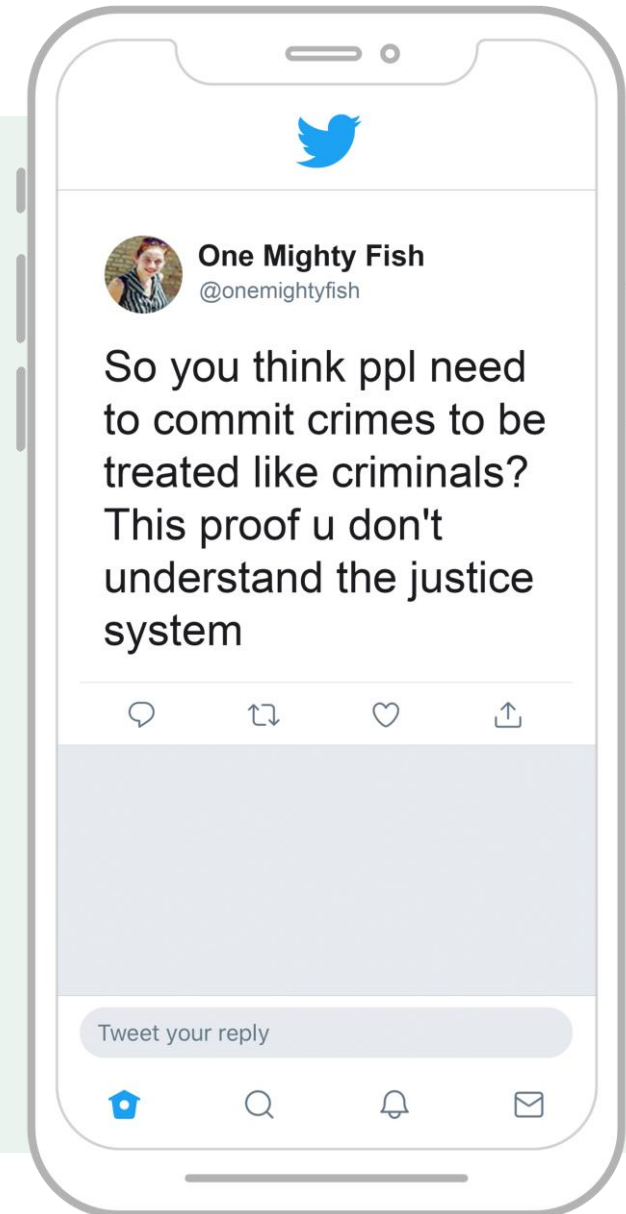
Skepticism about
the justice system **is high.**

“That’s the thing, it’s not about finding the truth, **it’s about winning**. That’s what they care about above all else.”

— Focus Group Participant
(white male, non-college educated)

“As I said before, they stopped me for no reason. I wasn’t even doing anything. **You don’t have to be a criminal to be treated like one.**”

— Focus Group Participant
(AA male, non-college educated)



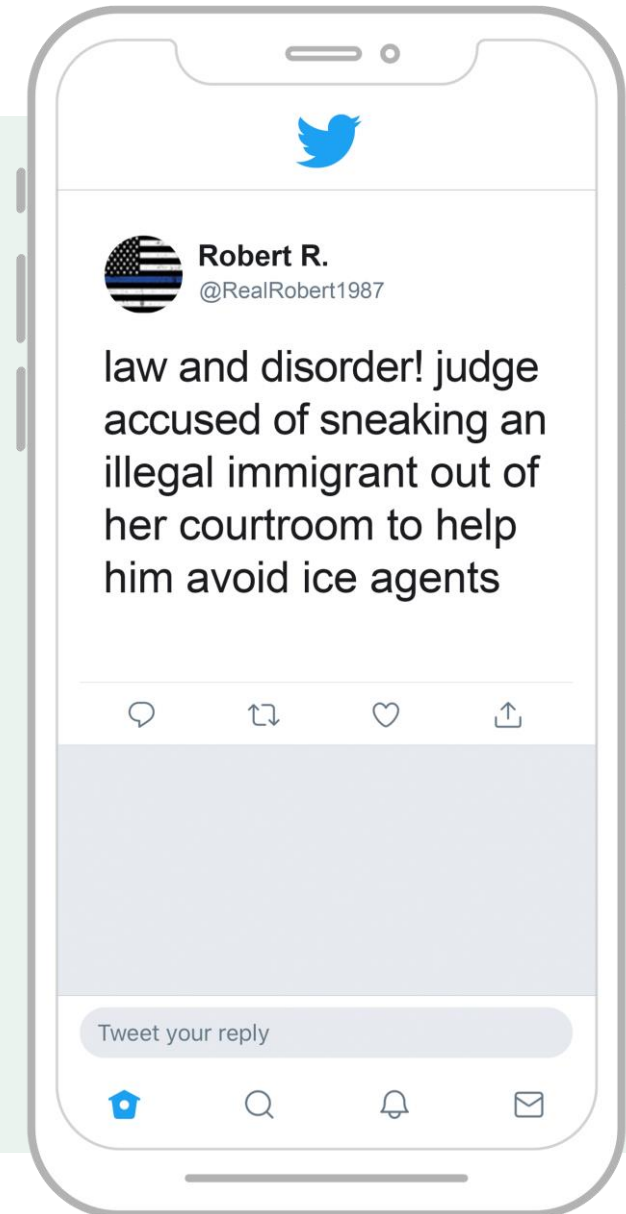
Disinformation typically
looks credible and legitimate.

“I mean the guy had a thin blue line flag. **How could he be bad, right?** Yeah, so I’m shocked. I shouldn’t be, but...”

— Focus Group Participant
(white male, some college education)

“I never would have expected to see something like this. I’m used to seeing, like you know, the Nigerian princes where everything is misspelled or it’s just words where they’re a little off...**these are really well put together.**”

— Focus Group Participant
(white male, some college education)

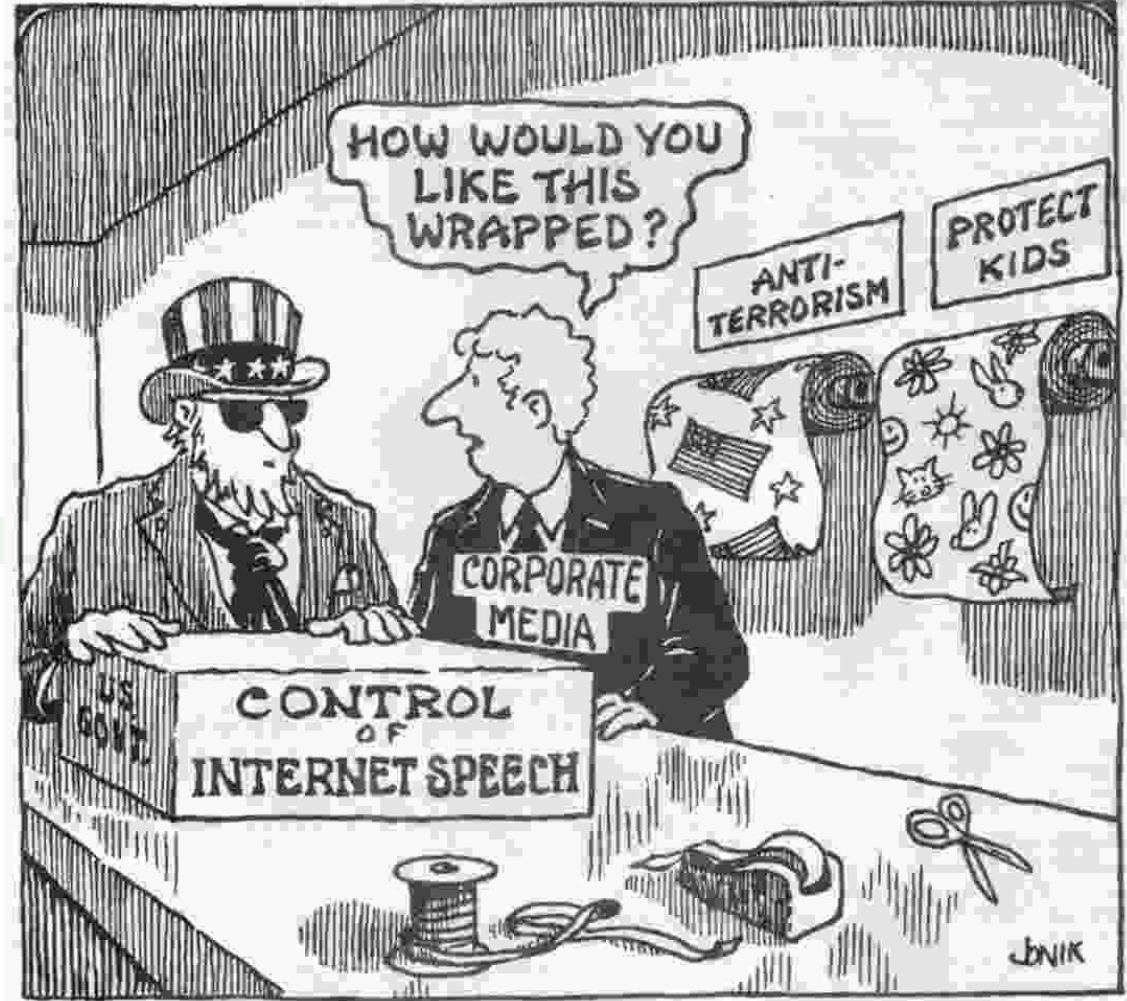


Posts reinforce existing ideologies/beliefs and **inflame already controversial societal issues.**

“If you live here, you know it’s true. ... **This is stuff we see on a daily basis**, so there’s nothing that really stands out.”

— Focus Group Participant
(AA female, high school education)

Policy solutions appear to
run counter to strongly-held
free speech principles.



Support for regulation stronger
with those with **higher education**.

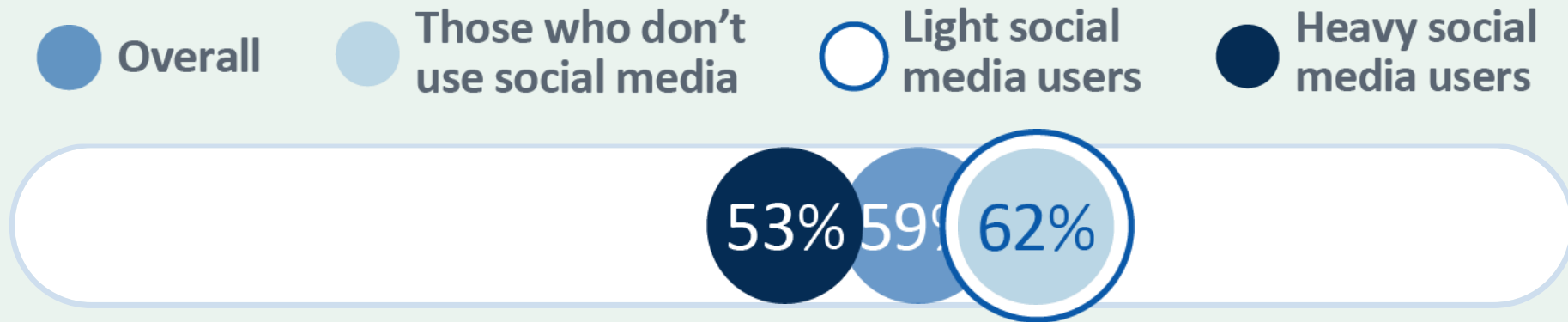
“The **clearly fake accounts**, that **shouldn't even be a question**. That should automatically be done, and that is something I agree that Facebook should be doing.”

— Focus Group Participant
(white male, college education)

There is a strong argument in favor of **deleting posts from inauthentic accounts.**

Q: “While free speech is important, foreign governments and Internet trolls do not have the same free speech rights as U.S. citizens.”

Percentage choosing the statement above, rather than a free speech argument.



Appeals to fight disinformation
should **focus on shared values.**

Q: “Please indicate how convincing you find each statement.”

Percentage saying somewhat or very convincing.

64%

U.S. justice system is **envy of the world**

73%

Civics education to remind us of **shared values**

74%

More **unites us** than divides us

Countering Disinformation:

Lessons From Focus Groups and Surveys



September 2020

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