



# FEDERAL ELECTION CRIMES

The FBI's Role in Protecting Your Vote

## FEDERAL ELECTION OVERVIEW

In the United States, the election process is the method by which we hold our government accountable and facilitate the peaceful and orderly transfer of power among elected officials. The process works when votes are not diluted by fraudulent ballots and campaign activities are bound by the law. When the legitimacy of elections are corrupted, our democracy is threatened.

**While individual states have primary responsibility for conducting fair and free elections, the FBI plays an important role in protecting federal interests and preventing violations of our Constitutional rights. Generally, federal jurisdiction in election-related crimes exists when:**

- The ballot includes a federal candidate;
- An election or polling official abuses their office;
- The conduct involves false voter registration; or
- The activity violates federal campaign finance laws.

**Federal election crimes investigated by the FBI fall into four broad categories:**

- Voter/ballot fraud
- Civil rights violations
- Campaign finance offenses
- Threats to election workers



## REMEMBER

**Armed FBI agents may not respond to any location where an election is actively being held. FBI agents also may not participate in counting, recounting, or tabulating ballots prior to certification of an election and the end of any election contest; however, FBI agents may be armed at a polling place for the purpose of casting their own vote.**  
**18 U.S.C. § 592**

# FEDERAL ELECTION OFFENSES

## 1. VOTER/BALLOT FRAUD

A voter intentionally gives false information when registering to vote (e.g., false citizenship claims) or an ineligible person votes in a federal election (e.g., non-citizens and some felons).

Vote buying schemes where the voter receives money or something of value (e.g., money, cigarettes, or drugs) in exchange for voting for a specific candidate or party in a federal election.

An individual votes more than once in a federal election (e.g., schemes to obtain absentee ballots and/or vote in the name of others).

An election official corrupts his or her office to benefit a candidate or party (e.g., stuffs a ballot box with illegal ballots or changes a ballot tally).

## 2. CIVIL RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

A voter is threatened with physical or economic harm unless the voter declines to vote or casts a ballot a particular way.

Efforts to prevent qualified voters from effectively voting by deceiving them as to the **time, place, or manner** of an election (voter suppression).

## 3. CAMPAIGN FINANCE CRIMES FEDERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN ACT (FECA)

**Excessive Contributions:** Donations made to candidates beyond the federal maximum limit permitted for individuals, political parties, political action committees (PACs), and tax-exempt organizations. A comprehensive list of current campaign donation limits is available at [www.fec.gov](http://www.fec.gov).

**Conduit Contributions (Straw Donor Schemes):** A person makes a contribution to a federal candidate in the name of another person, or a person allows their name to be used to make such a contribution.

**Domestic Prohibited Sources:** A corporation, labor organization, bank, or government contractor contributes to a federal candidate's campaign.

**Foreign Prohibited Sources:** A foreign individual or entity (who is not a lawful permanent resident) contributes to any federal, state, or local candidate's campaign or makes independent expenditures to influence an election.

**Super PACs and Independent Expenditure-Only Committees (IEOs):** FECA donation limits do not apply to Super PACs and IEO contributions or expenditures, and Super PACs and IEOs can accept money from corporations and labor organizations; however, it is unlawful for these entities to coordinate their activity with a candidate's campaign.

**Abuse of Campaign Funds:** Exploiting campaign contributions for personal or unauthorized use (e.g., using campaign funds to purchase a boat for personal leisure).



## WHAT IS NOT A FEDERAL ELECTION CRIME

- Giving voters a ride to the polls or time off to vote.
- Offering voters a stamp to mail an absentee ballot.
- False claims about oneself or another candidate.
- Asking an opponent to withdraw from a race.
- Honest mistakes by polling place workers.
- Campaigning too close to polling locations.
- Delays reporting election results.



## ELECTION THREATS TASK FORCE

The Department of Justice, in partnership with the FBI, established the Election Threats Task Force to address threats of violence targeting election workers.

If you or someone you know has received threats of violence as an election worker, please consider taking the following steps:

- Call **911** for an immediate threat to life;
- Contact your local FBI field office and ask for the Election Crimes Coordinator ([www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices](http://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices));
- **1-800-CALL-FBI (225-5324)** or [tips.fbi.gov](http://tips.fbi.gov); and
- If feasible, attempt to preserve the threatening or intimidating communication to share with law enforcement.



## CONTACT US

If you think an election crime is occurring:  
Call your local FBI field office and ask for the Election Crimes Coordinator:

 [tips.fbi.gov](http://tips.fbi.gov)

 [fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices](http://fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices)

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