

DEMOCRACY THREAT: ELECTION CERTIFICATION IN NOVEMBER 2024 AND BEYOND

**BY INVOKING
FALSE CONSPIRACY
THEORIES ABOUT
PREVIOUS ELECTIONS,
EACH REFUSAL TO
CERTIFY THREATENS
TO VALIDATE THE
BROADER ELECTION
DENIER MOVEMENT
WHILE ATTEMPTING
TO SOW DISORDER
IN STATE ELECTION
ADMINISTRATION
PROCESSES.**

CONTACT:

Sarah Khan-Williamson,
State Communications
Director
sarah@allvotingislocal.org

2024 Watch: Election Certification

Once a drama-free formality of verifying and accounting for the final result tally, election certification has taken center stage in recent years. While certification has always been and remains a mandatory requirement of election officials, challenges to certification at the local and state level have become a top threat as we head into the November 2024 election.

Election Certification & Election Denialism

Since 2020, more than 35 [officials](#) in several states have either refused or threatened to refuse to certify election results in their counties or states. Often, the officials have attempted to justify their refusal using rhetoric rooted in election denialism, essentially confirming that this dereliction of the duty to certify is to create uncertainty over who has won the election and open the door for election deniers to exploit this uncertainty to claim that our election system is broken and results cannot be trusted.

The refusal to certify is a resounding effect of election denial and the Big Lie; by invoking false conspiracy theories about previous elections, each refusal to certify threatens to validate the broader election denier movement while attempting to sow disorder in state election administration processes. While any attempts at refusing to certify and essentially overturn the will of the people have failed, the impact of delaying certification remains. Refusal to certify has been, and will continue to be, about delaying results, casting doubt on elections, and putting forth long-game efforts to put into place policies that are bad for voters, as distrust in our elections is a significant driver of election policies and efforts that harm voters. For example, efforts to remove and disenfranchise voters en masse through [mass voter challenges](#) and changes to [how ballots are counted](#) to make it easier to sabotage elections have become a top threat to our democracy – both of which have gained traction due to election denialism.

Guardrails and Policies

Fortunately, as previously failed attempts at refusing to certify our elections have shown, certifying elections is the mandatory democratic duty of election officials – they don't get to override the will of the people by refusing to certify. Refusal to certify an election is [illegal](#) in many states; every state and county has systems in place to address problems that can arise with the way the election is being administered, and refusing to certify isn't one of them.

In fact, [across all states](#), the certification of election results is a mandatory duty, state officials and courts can step in to compel certification if an official delays or refuses to certify results, and officials who refuse to certify can be held accountable through civil and criminal penalties. **Along with guardrails and policies in place, public pressure and threats of legal action have ensured that the refusal to certify only delays democracy but does not defeat it in the end.**

Combatting Election Certification Refusal

Despite the dozens of efforts to stop certification across the country since 2020, none have prevented the successful conclusion of an election. This is due to many factors, including:

- **Public pressure:** Groups such as All Voting is Local and All Voting is Local Action have shown up to boards of elections and county commission meetings with community members to underscore the importance of ensuring election certification. For example, in Georgia, the All Voting is Local Action Georgia team has continuously shown up to testify in front of the State Elections Board against policies that could [empower election officials to refuse or delay certification](#).
- **Threats of legal action:** The latest example of this was in Washoe, in which county commissioners who had previously refused to certify admitted that [the threat of criminal penalties](#) compelled them to certify election results.

It is important to underscore that normalizing the actions of these extremist election officials is accepting the premise that they can pick and choose which votes count and which don't. That is fundamentally undemocratic and un-American. This is why it's crucial that election officials, such as county boards of elections staff and commissioners, come together and announce the importance of certifying election results on the record. **Instead of casting doubt on legitimate voting counts by taking actions that only fuel suspicion about the processes that have worked for decades, our officials must respect the results and honor the will of voters.**

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