

Big Lies and Greater Truths¹

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Donald Trump and the Republican Party do not depend upon a single Big Lie but rather a series of self-reinforcing, interlocking Big Lies.

The original and most pernicious Big Lie is the claim of “rampant” voter fraud. It is the base that supports the most preposterous Big Lie, the “Stolen Election” chimera, which Republicans weaponize to enact antidemocratic, abhorrent, and indefensible voter suppression laws. It is also the most repeatedly debunked of Big Lies.

The Greater Truth is that Republicans have tried and failed for decades to prove that voter fraud is affecting or threatening our elections. What they’ve proven is the converse—there simply is no empirical evidence of any significant voter fraud.

In 2002, George W. Bush’s Attorney General, John Ashcroft, ordered federal prosecutors to begin a concerted effort to find and prosecute voter fraud. After 5 years, the Justice Department charged only 120 people with voter fraud (obtaining convictions in 86 cases). That translates to less than one instance per state every other year, virtually all of which involved mistakes by individuals and not organized efforts to steal elections.

Not only was the quest a failure, it caused a scandal. Ashcroft’s successor, Alberto Gonzales, fired seven U.S. attorneys, all of them Bush appointees, because they refused orders to prosecute nonexistent voter fraud. The outcry led to Gonzales’s resignation and an Justice Department investigation that concluded the firings “raised doubts about the integrity of Department prosecution decisions.”

To support the Big Lie that the reason he lost the popular vote in 2016 by nearly 3 million votes was because millions of illegal immigrants had voted, Trump established the “Voter Fraud Commission.” The Greater Truth is that the Commission lasted for less than 8 months and disbanded without finding any evidence of voter fraud.

The Mother of all the Big Lies is Trump’s claim that the 2020 election was stolen. The Greater Truths are that virtually all 61 lawsuits challenging the results were dismissed (by Republican as well as Democratic judges) and the vote was certified by state election officials in every state (Republicans as well as Democrats). This is irrelevant to the 70% of Republicans who believe Trump’s Big Lie because, as Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels taught, “If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it.”

Ironically, what is promoted as empirical proof of voter fraud is the most damning evidence that the claim is, and has always been, a Big Lie. On its “Election Fraud Database” the Heritage Foundation trumpets “1,340 proven instances of voter fraud,” but The Greater Truth is that the database covers 20 years, so the real incidence of voter fraud is slightly over one case per state per year. As Gertrude Stein might have said, there simply is “no there there.”

¹ [*The Delray Democrat*](#), January 2022, page 4.

The real fraud is the dissemination of the Big Lies, and the real threats to our democracy are the dozens of voter suppression bills passed by Republicans because they know they cannot compete on a level playing field. Republicans need to **Stop the Lies**.