

The Delray Democrat

Push Polls¹

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With the 2022 Florida campaigns in full swing, the effort to steal or subvert the vote has begun in earnest. I received an unsolicited text purporting to be from some “Florida Survey Organization” that was seeking to collect survey data related to the gubernatorial and senatorial campaigns. This looked remarkably similar to fake surveys I received from State Rep Mike Caruso’s campaign and Tracy Caruso’s failed mayoral campaign and I was right. Voters and election officials must be aware of these fake surveys, as they are designed to misinform, mislead, and dissuade voters from supporting democratic candidates.

The surveys ask a few general questions about whom you voted for and whether you have positive or negative views of specific candidates or elected officials. They then go on to provide what they claim is a statement of fact and ask if that fact makes you more or less likely to vote for the candidate. All the statements pertaining to candidates Charlie Crist and Val Demmings are either blatantly false or intentionally extremely misleading, baselessly asserting something extremely negative about the candidate. They then provide statements about Ron DeSantis and Marco Rubio, also blatantly false and misleading, but all of which are positive messages. The negative statements about the Democratic candidates are designed to underhandedly influence voters to lower their opinion of these candidates based on the false information and dissuade them from voting for them or voting at all. The positive statements about the Republican candidates are designed to embellish opinions of these candidates, thus increasing votes for the Republican candidates.

Do these sound like bona fide surveys? Certainly not. They are illegitimate in every way, disguising what are blatant political hatchet jobs as voter surveys. They plant exclusively false negatives about Democratic candidates and exclusively false positives about the Republicans. Surveys ask questions, they do not intentionally plant one-sided, blatantly false information about candidates. It is critical for voters to watch for these surveys, and regardless of whether the voters choose to answer the questions, they must not fall victim to the dishonest messaging.

Some of the surveys arrive by email or text, but others are by phone call. The callers are usually not from the organizations behind the surveys, but rather dupes they hired to brainlessly and simply go through a list of questions and record the “yes or no” responses. When I get these folks on the phone, I keep trying to ask whether they are aware that the statements they are reading are false, who is sponsoring the surveys, and whether they realize they are engaging in dishonesty and election law violations. All I get in return is that the callers were just hired to sit in an office and ask the list of questions without deviation. I hope their mothers are proud that they are lying to voters and subverting the vote.

Mike Caruso used these tactics effectively against Jim Bonfiglio, constantly smearing him with such attacks in fake surveys. Tracy Caruso engaged in the same extreme dishonesty in her failed

¹ *The Delray Democrat*, April 2022, page 1.

mayoral campaign, and came dangerously close to winning that election. The Carusos are obviously not alone and other Republican candidates use the same despicable tactics. Investigations into election law violations demonstrated that this is a right-wing effort wherein a political organization created layers of phony shell companies to hide their true identity and culpability in these schemes. They use this shell game to improperly solicit and donate money for campaigns such as Caruso's, to create and distribute dishonest, dangerous campaign mailings, and to hide their true identity.

The Carusos are all in for Ron DeSantis and the MAGA movement. Mike Caruso just appeared with DeSantis while the governor spewed his racist, extremist nonsense. Using this shell game system of phony companies, they and others attempt to hide their true support for and from the Republican extremist base. They pretend to have no part in such vile political opprobrium. Voters need to understand what is happening and reject this attempt to subvert their vote. Do not vote for campaigns that use these surveys. If they want to blatantly lie about their Democratic opponent, then do it under their own name instead of cowardly disgracing themselves hiding behind the shell companies. If candidates need to go to such lengths to hide their views and tactics, they cannot be trusted to serve the public interest.