

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's Special Session Agenda Fuels Right-Wing Conspiracy Theories But Fails To Address The State's Deadly Power Grid Failure

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott Has Revealed A Heavily Conservative Agenda For The State's Special Legislative Session, Where State Republicans Will Try To Push Priorities That Failed During The Regular Session.

July 7, 2021: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott Revealed A Heavily Conservative Agenda For Texas' Special Legislative Session Where Republican Lawmakers Are Expected To Pursue Bills That Didn't Pass During The State's Regular Session—Including Controversial Voting Restrictions.

July 7, 2021: Texas Governor Greg Abbott Announced The Agenda For The Texas Legislature's Special Session Set To Begin On July 8, 2021. “Governor Greg Abbott today issued a proclamation that identifies eleven agenda items for the Special Session that begins at 10:00 AM on Thursday, July 8.” [Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, [07/07/21](#)]

The 11 Items In Abbott's Agenda Were Meant To “Largely Appeal To Conservatives Who Wanted More Out Of The Regular Session” That Ended Earlier In 2021. “Gov. Greg Abbott has announced the agenda for the special legislative session that begins Thursday, asking lawmakers to prioritize 11 issues that largely appeal to conservatives who wanted more out of the regular session.” [Texas Tribune, [07/07/21](#)]

Most Of Abbott's Agenda Consisted Of Items That Did Not Pass During The Regular Legislative Session Earlier In 2021. “The agenda includes Abbott's priority bills related to overhauling Texas elections and the bail system, as well as pushing back against social media ‘censorship’ of Texans and the teaching of critical race theory in schools. Most of those issues were anticipated after they did not pass during the regular session and Abbott faced pressure to revive them or had already committed to bringing them back.” [Texas Tribune, [07/07/21](#)]

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick Indicated The State Senate Was “Prepared To Move Quickly,” Starting With Voting Restrictions That State Democrats Said Would “Make It Harder For Texans Of Color To Vote.” Starting “Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick indicated the Senate was prepared to move quickly, starting with the voting legislation. He said in a tweet that committee hearings would begin Saturday.” [Texas Tribune, [07/07/21](#)]

- **The Voting Restrictions Bill That Failed In The Regular Session Was Criticized By Democrats Who Argued It Would “Make It Harder For Texans Of Color To Vote.”** “The elections bill would have instituted new rules around early voting hours, local voting options and mail ballots. Democrats said the legislation amounted to voter suppression that would make it harder for Texans of color to vote.” [Texas Tribune, [07/07/21](#)]

Although Gov. Abbott's Agenda Prioritizes So-Called “Election Integrity,” Voter Fraud Is Exceedingly Rare In Texas—Texas' Proposed Election Restrictions Are Instead Based In Voter Fraud Conspiracy Theories And Trump's “Big Lie.”

Texas Governor Greg Abbott's July 2021 Agenda Identified "Legislation Strengthening The Integrity Of Elections In Texas" As A Priority...

Abbott's Agenda Identified "Legislation Strengthening The Integrity Of Elections In Texas" As A Priority. "ELECTION INTEGRITY: Legislation strengthening the integrity of elections in Texas." [Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, [07/07/21](#)]

...But Voter Fraud Is Extremely Rare In Texas—A U.S. Appeals Court Noted Only Two Voter Fraud Convictions Out of 20 Million Votes Cast Over A Decade, And There Is Only One Pending Voter Fraud Case In Texas Out Of The 11 Million Votes Cast In 2020.

In A 2016 Decision Striking Down Texas' Voter ID Law Known As SB 14, A U.S. Appeals Court Noted "Two Convictions For In-Person Voter Impersonation Fraud Out Of 20 Million Votes Cast In The Decade Leading Up To SB 14's Passage." "Ballot integrity is undoubtedly a worthy goal. But the evidence before the Legislature was that in-person voting, the only concern addressed by SB 14, yielded only two convictions for in-person voter impersonation fraud out of 20 million votes cast in the decade leading up to SB 14's passage." [United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, Case No. 14-41127, En Banc Opinion accessed via [brennancenter.org](#), filed [07/20/16](#)]

Trump's Own U.S. Attorney General Bill Barr Found No Evidence Of Widespread Election Fraud In The 2020 Election. "Disputing President Donald Trump's persistent, baseless claims, Attorney General William Barr declared the U.S. Justice Department has uncovered no evidence of widespread voter fraud that could change the outcome of the 2020 election [...] Barr's comments, in an interview Tuesday with the The Associated Press, contradict the concerted effort by Trump, his boss, to subvert the results of last month's voting and block President-elect Joe Biden from taking his place in the White House." [U.S. News, [12/02/20](#)]

Only One Pending Voter Fraud Case In The State Of Texas Is Related To The 2020 Election, In Which Over 11 Million Texans Voted. "In defending his controversial voting bill on CNN on Sunday, Texas state Sen. Bryan Hughes claimed half a dozen times that the attorney general's office had 400 open voter fraud cases [...] Yet that number is almost 10 times larger than the number of people with pending voter fraud charges in Texas, which is 43, according to data from the attorney general's office. Only one of those pending cases stems from the 2020 election, in which more than 11 million Texans cast ballots." [Houston Chronicle, [07/08/21](#)]

- **Over 11 Million Texans Voted In The 2020 Election.** "In defending his controversial voting bill on CNN on Sunday, Texas state Sen. Bryan Hughes claimed half a dozen times that the attorney general's office had 400 open voter fraud cases [...] Yet that number is almost 10 times larger than the number of people with pending voter fraud charges in Texas, which is 43, according to data from the attorney general's office. Only one of those pending cases stems from the 2020 election, in which more than 11 million Texans cast ballots." [Houston Chronicle, [07/08/21](#)]

The Washington Post Described Trump's "Big Lie" Of Election Fraud As Inspiring Republicans' Wave Of Voter Restrictions "Under The Guise Of Assuring Election Integrity"—Texas State Legislators' Attempts To Pass Voting Restrictions Have Been Described As An Effort To "Codify" Trump's Conspiracy Theories.

According To The Washington Post, Trump's "Big Lie" Of Election Fraud Has "Spawned A Movement That Under The Guise Of Assuring Election Integrity Threatens To Do The Opposite." "Donald Trump's 'big lie' has spawned a movement that under the guise of assuring election integrity threatens to do the opposite, potentially affecting the election process with questionable challenges that could block or delay the

certification of results and undermine an essential pillar of democratic governance.” [Washington Post, [05/29/21](#)]

According To The Washington Post, Trump’s “Fiction” That The 2020 Election Was Stolen “Has Encouraged Members Of His Party” To “Take Steps” On Election Integrity. “Trump’s refusal to accept the 2020 results has kept alive the fiction that the election was stolen or the process was deeply corrupted. That fiction — fueled by conspiracy theories — has encouraged members of his party, elected officials and ordinary citizens, to take steps to address this; these actions could lead to worse outcomes in the future.” [Washington Post, [05/29/21](#)]

According To Vox, Texas State Legislators’ Attempts To Pass Voting Restrictions Are “An Attempt To Codify Trump’s “Big Lie” And “An Effort” To Give Texas Republicans “A Leg Up” In Elections. “But the anti-democratic intent of the Texas bills is clear: They are at once an attempt to codify Trump’s ‘Big Lie’ about a stolen election — a conspiracy theory widely embraced by Texas Republicans — and an effort to give the state GOP a leg up in future elections.” [Vox, [04/19/21](#)]

Gov. Abbott’s Agenda Includes Legislation On “Social Media Censorship”—Abbott Has Claimed There Was A “Dangerous Movement” To Silence Conservatives On Social Media, But In Reality, Right-Wing Accounts Have Been Key In Driving Conspiracy Theories And A Recent Study Found That Claims Of Anti-Conservative Bias Are “A Form Of Disinformation”

Gov. Abbott’s Agenda Includes Legislation On “Social Media Censorship”...

Abbott’s Agenda Identified Legislation On “Social Media Censorship” As A Priority. “SOCIAL MEDIA CENSORSHIP: Legislation safeguarding the freedom of speech by protecting social-media users from being censored by social-media companies based on the user’s expressed viewpoints, including by providing a legal remedy for those wrongfully excluded from a platform.” [Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, [07/07/21](#)]

...Abbot Has Recently Claimed There Is A “Dangerous Movement” To Silence Conservative Ideas—Rhetoric That Ramped Up After President Trump’s Social Media Accounts Were Banned For Inciting Violence During The Jan 6 Capitol Riots.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott Claimed That “There Is A Dangerous Movement [...] To Try And Silence Conservative Ideas, Religious Beliefs” As He Discussed “Big Tech’s Efforts To Silence Conservative Viewpoints.” “There is a dangerous movement that is spreading across the country to try to silence conservative ideas, religious beliefs,’ Abbott said during a news conference. ‘Big tech's efforts to silence conservative viewpoints is un-American, un-Texan, and it is unacceptable, and pretty soon it's going to be against the law in the state of Texas.” [Austin American-Statesman, [03/05/21](#)]

Conservatives’ Rhetoric That They Were Being Silenced Increased After The 2020 Election, When Facebook And Twitter “Removed Former President Donald Trump’s Account For Inciting Violence During The Jan 6 U.S. Capitol Insurrection.” “The rhetoric about silencing conservatives ramped up following the 2020 election, when platforms including Facebook and Twitter removed former President Donald Trump’s account for inciting violence during the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol insurrection. Prior to that, the platforms attached warnings to posts by Trump and other conservatives who were, without evidence, sowing doubt on the legitimacy of the election.” [Texas Tribune, [03/30/21](#)]

Multiple Reports And Analyses Have Found That The Right Wing Social Media Accounts Help Drive “Elaborate Conspiracy Theories” About Election Integrity, QAnon, And COVID-19.

HEADLINE: “New Data Bolsters The Idea That The Far-Right Media Ecosystem Is A Conspiracy Theory Petri Dish.” [Washington Post, [05/27/21](#)]

A Politico Analysis Found That Conservative And Right Wing Social Media Accounts “Still Rule Online,” Sometimes Being Shared 10 Times As “The Most Popular Liberal Posts.” “But a POLITICO analysis of millions of social media posts shows that conservatives still rule online [...] As racial protests engulfed the nation after George Floyd’s death, users shared the most-viral right-wing social media content more than 10 times as often as the most popular liberal posts, frequently associating the Black Lives Matter movement with violence and accusing Democrats like Joe Biden of supporting riots. People also shared conservatives’ most-read claims of rampant voter fraud roughly twice as often as they did liberals’ or traditional media outlets’ discussions of the issue, the analysis found. The conservatives’ tactics included spinning mainstream media coverage on voting irregularities into elaborate conspiracy theories, sometimes echoed by Trump, that Democratic lawmakers are trying to steal November’s election.” [Politico, [10/26/20](#)]

According To Politico, The Conservative Accounts’ “Tactics Included Spinning Mainstream Media Coverage On Voting Irregularities Into Elaborate Conspiracy Theories [...] That Democratic Lawmakers Are Trying To Steal November’s Election.” “People also shared conservatives’ most-read claims of rampant voter fraud roughly twice as often as they did liberals’ or traditional media outlets’ discussions of the issue, the analysis found. The conservatives’ tactics included spinning mainstream media coverage on voting irregularities into elaborate conspiracy theories, sometimes echoed by Trump, that Democratic lawmakers are trying to steal November’s election.” [Politico, [10/26/20](#)]

Conspiracy Theory QAnon Supporters “Flooded Social Media With False Information About COVID-19, The Black Lives Matter Protests, And The Presidential Election. “QAnon was once a fringe phenomenon — the kind most people could safely ignore. But recently, it has gone mainstream. In 2020, QAnon supporters flooded social media with false information about Covid-19, the Black Lives Matter protests and the presidential election, and recruited legions of new believers to their ranks.” [New York Times, [06/15/21](#)]

A New York University Report Found That Social Media Networks Are Not Systematically Biased Against Conservatives And That Claims Of Anti-Conservative Bias Are “A Form Of Disinformation.”

A New York University Report Found That Social Media Networks Aren’t Systematically Biased Against Conservatives, “Directly Contradicting Republican Claims that Social Media Companies Are Censoring Them.” “A new report concludes that social networks aren't systematically biased against conservatives, directly contradicting Republican claims that social media companies are censoring them. Recent moves by Twitter and Facebook to suspend former president Donald Trump's accounts in the wake of the violence at the Capitol are inflaming conservatives' attacks on Silicon Valley. But New York University researchers today released a report stating claims of anti-conservative bias are ‘a form of disinformation: a falsehood with no reliable evidence to support it.’” [Washington Post, [02/01/21](#)]

- **The Report Found That Claims Of Anti-Conservative Bias Are “A Form Of Disinformation.”** “But New York University researchers today released a report stating claims of anti-conservative bias are ‘a form of disinformation: a falsehood with no reliable evidence to support it.’” [Washington Post, [02/01/21](#)]

Gov. Abbott’s Agenda Revives Attempts To Limit Public School Teachers’ Ability To Discuss Current Events Or America’s Racial History By Appealing To Anti-“Critical Race Theory” Propaganda, A Form Of Backlash To The Racial Justice Movement.

Gov. Abbott’s Agenda Revives Attempts To Limit Public School Teachers’ Ability To Discuss Current Events Or America’s Racial History, Citing Concerns Over “Critical Race Theory.”

Abbott’s Agenda Identified Legislation On “Critical Race Theory” As A Priority. “CRITICAL RACE THEORY: Legislation similar to House Bill 3979 concerning critical race theory as originally passed by the Texas Senate in the 87th Legislature, Regular Session.” [Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, [07/07/21](#)]

Abbott’s Agenda Specifically Identifies Legislation Similar To House Bill 3979, Which Attempted To Limit Texas Social Studies Teachers Ability To Discuss Current Events Or America’s Racial History. “While it has gained the ire of national Republicans on Fox News and elsewhere for months, critical race theory was thrust in the political spotlight in Texas this spring because of the progress of HB 3979. [...] The wording of the bill is vague — for example, it bans discussion of current events unless a teacher ‘strive[s] to explore those topics from diverse and contending perspectives without giving deference to any one perspective, and teachers can’t teach that ‘with respect to their relationship to American values, slavery and ‘racism are anything other than deviations from, betrayals of, or failures to live up to, the authentic founding principles of the United States, which include liberty and equality.” [Texas Tribune, [6/22/21](#)]

The Current Usage Of The Term “Critical Race Theory” Was Developed By A Right-Wing Think Tank Worker To Attack Anti-Racism Efforts Following The 2020 George Floyd Protest Movement.

The Current Usage Of The Term “Critical Race Theory” Was Developed By Right-Wing Think Tank Worker Chris Rufo To Label Progressive Racial Ideology As ““Hostile, Academic, Divisive, Race-Obsessed, Poisonous, Elitist, Anti-American”” To ““Most Middle Class Americans.”” “He thought that the phrase was a better description of what conservatives were opposing, but it also seemed like a promising political weapon. ‘Its connotations are all negative to most middle-class Americans, including racial minorities, who see the world as ‘creative’ rather than ‘critical,’ ‘individual’ rather than ‘racial,’ ‘practical’ rather than ‘theoretical.’ Strung together, the phrase ‘critical race theory’ connotes hostile, academic, divisive, race-obsessed, poisonous, elitist, anti-American.’ Most perfect of all, Rufo continued, critical race theory is not ‘an externally applied pejorative.’ Instead, ‘it’s the label the critical race theorists chose themselves.” [New Yorker, [6/18/21](#)]

Conservatives, Including Gov. Abbott, Have Used Fear Mongering Over “Critical Race Theory” To Drum Up Policy Designed To Denounce Anti-Racism Efforts In Education And Restrict Anti-Racist Historical Narratives In Public School Curriculums. “Gov. Greg Abbott signed into law a bill last week that restricts how current events and America’s history of racism can be taught in Texas schools. It’s been commonly referred to as the ‘critical race theory’ bill, though the term ‘critical race theory’ never appears in it. [...] Meanwhile, the debate has taken hold across the nation. Last year, conservative activist Christopher Rufo began using the term ‘critical race theory’ publicly to denounce anti-racist education efforts. Since then, conservative lawmakers, commentators and parents have raised alarm that critical race theory is being used to teach children that they are racist, and that the U.S. is a racist country with irredeemable roots.” [Texas Tribune, [6/22/21](#)]

The Anti-Critical Race Theory Movement Is Viewed By Some Anti-Racism Experts As A Backlash To Cultural Desire To Combat Racism Following The 2020 George Floyd Protests. “As she saw it, the campaign against critical race theory represented a familiar effort to shift the point of the argument, so that,

rather than being about structural racism, post-George Floyd politics were about the seminars that had proliferated to address structural racism. I asked Crenshaw whether she thought that the anti-racism seminars were doing good.” [New Yorker, [6/18/21](#)]

Experts In Texas Believe That The Anti-Critical Race Theory Legislation Is An Attempt To “Stop The Momentum” Of Antiracism Education And Would Lead To Many Schools Not Discussing Racism At All.

Experts In Texas Believe That The Anti-Critical Race Theory Legislation Is An Attempt To “Stop The Momentum” Of Anti-Racism Education And Would Lead To Many Schools Not Discussing Racism At All. “Brown, the UT-Austin cultural studies professor, described the new Texas law as an effort to ‘try to stop the momentum over the last year and a half of families and communities saying we need to know more about racism.’ ‘We need to understand [our history of racism] so that we actually can get to a place where we are operating with justice, with equity, with fairness,’ she said. Instead, she said, the bill may ‘create enough confusion and possible concern that teachers or districts would just simply not talk about issues of race, or racism, for fear that it’s going to create some conflict.’” [Texas Tribune, [6/22/21](#)]

Meanwhile, Gov. Abbott’s Agenda Notably Fails To Address Texas’ Power Grid, Which Drew National Criticism After “One Of The Worst Power Outages In U.S. History” In February 2021 Was Tied To Potentially Hundreds Of Deaths.

Gov. Abbott’s Agenda Notably Did Not Include Any Items To Address Texas’ Power Grid, Which Drew National Attention In February 2021 After “One Of The Worst Power Outages In U.S. History” Left Millions Without Power And Was Linked To Potentially Hundreds Of Deaths.

Gov. Abbott’s Agenda Did Not Include Any Thing To Address The State’s Power Grid “Which Was Exposed As Deeply Vulnerable During A Deadly Winter Weather Storm In February 2021 That Left Millions Of Texans Without Power.” “Abbott’s agenda for the first special session notably does not include anything about the state’s electric grid, which was exposed as deeply vulnerable during a deadly winter weather storm in February that left millions of Texans without power. Lawmakers made some progress in preventing another disaster during the regular session, but experts — as well as Patrick — have said there is more to do. Last month, calls for the Legislature to take further action to fix the power grid were renewed when grid officials asked Texans to conserve energy.” [Texas Tribune, [07/07/21](#)]

During The Storm, 4 Million Texans Lost Power During “One Of The Worst Power Outages In U.S. History,” And Officials Began Tracking The Number Of Deaths Linked With The Storm—The “Majority” Of Which Were Linked To Hypothermia. “Texas officials on Thursday raised the death toll from February’s winter storm and blackouts to at least 111 people — nearly doubling the state’s initial tally following one of the worst power outages in U.S. history. [...] The majority of the Texas deaths are associated with hypothermia, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services. And the dramatic number of new victims is still a potential undercount, as officials continue investigating deaths that happened around the time the storm knocked out power to more than 4 million customers in Texas.” [Associated Press, [03/25/21](#)]

As Of Late May 2021, Texas’ Official Death Count From The Storm Was 151, But One Study Estimated That About 700 People Were Killed In The Storm—“Nearly Four-Times Higher Than The State’s Tally.” “The number of people killed in the brutal winter storm that overwhelmed Texas’s power grid in February is likely four or five times more than what the state has acknowledged, according to a new report from *Buzzfeed News*, as the disaster’s true impact continues to be revealed. [...] The state’s official tally currently stands at 151 dead, with the majority of the deaths centered in Harris County (home to Houston), Travis County (Austin) and Dallas. [...] The analysis, also reviewed by three independent experts, suggests that between 426 and 978

more people died during the week ending Feb. 20 than what the state has accounted for. The 'best estimate' is that 702 people were killed in the storm that week, the report says, which is nearly four-times higher than the state's tally." [Forbes, [05/27/21](#)]