

# Time Magazine: ‘Secret,’ ‘Well-funded Cabal’ Worked to ‘Protect’ (STEAL) 2020 Election

-Joel B. Pollak

*Time* magazine has published a detailed account of what it describes as a “conspiracy” between “left-wing activists and business titans” to create “an extraordinary shadow effort” to “protect” the 2020 presidential election.

The *New York Times* had [reported](#) on the effort in January, referring to the “Democracy Defense Coalition.” The Daily Beast [hinted](#) at it in the fall. But the *Time* article is the most in-depth report at what others suggested was going on behind the scenes.

The [article](#) by Molly Ball, titled “The Secret History of the Shadow Campaign That Saved the 2020 Election,” presents the effort as a heroic effort to preserve a free and fair election, and to fend off President Donald Trump’s anticipated claims of fraud.

Ball’s description, however, also matches what she calls a “paranoid” view of an effort to make it difficult for Trump to win:

The handshake between business and labor was just one component of a vast, cross-partisan campaign to protect the election—an extraordinary shadow effort dedicated not to winning the vote but to ensuring it would be free and fair, credible and uncorrupted. For more than a year, a loosely organized coalition of operatives scrambled to shore up America’s institutions as they came under simultaneous attack from a remorseless pandemic and an autocratically inclined President. Though much of this activity took place on the left, it was separate from the Biden campaign and crossed ideological lines, with crucial contributions by nonpartisan and conservative actors.

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Their work touched every aspect of the election. They got states to change voting systems and laws and helped secure hundreds of millions in public and private funding. They fended off voter-suppression lawsuits, recruited armies of poll workers and got millions of people to vote by mail for the first time. They successfully pressured social media companies to take a harder line against disinformation and used data-driven strategies to fight viral smears. They executed national public-awareness campaigns that helped Americans understand how the vote count would unfold over days or weeks, preventing Trump’s conspiracy theories and false claims of victory from getting more traction. After Election Day, they monitored every pressure point to ensure that Trump could not overturn the result.

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That's why the participants want the secret history of the 2020 election told, even though it sounds like a paranoid fever dream—a well-funded cabal of powerful people, ranging across industries and ideologies, working together behind the scenes to influence perceptions, change rules and laws, steer media coverage and control the flow of information. They were not rigging the election; they were fortifying it. And they believe the public needs to understand the system's fragility in order to ensure that democracy in America endures.

Ball describes the participants in this plan as “democracy campaigners.” It was led by Mike Podhorzer, a “senior adviser to the president of the AFL-CIO,” one of the nation's most powerful labor unions, aligned with the Democratic Party.

Ball notes:

In his apartment in the D.C. suburbs, Podhorzer began working from his laptop at his kitchen table, holding back-to-back Zoom meetings for hours a day with his network of contacts across the progressive universe: the labor movement; the institutional left, like Planned Parenthood and Greenpeace; resistance groups like Indivisible and MoveOn; progressive data geeks and strategists, representatives of donors and foundations, state-level grassroots organizers, racial-justice activists and others.

By April, she notes, Podhorzer was hosting two-and-a-half-hour Zoom meetings with other participants in the project. They pushed Congress to fund vote by mail, and persuaded Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg to contribute hundreds of millions of dollars to “election administration funding.” (As Breitbart News [warned](#), Zuckerberg's donations looked more like a Democrat get-out-the-vote effort, and was [aimed](#) primarily at Democrat-heavy counties in key battleground states.)

The campaign also used legal efforts to change voting procedures during the COVID pandemic, leading to a “revolution” in mail-in voting: “Only a quarter of voters cast their ballots the traditional way: in person on Election Day,” Ball notes.

The group also used a “nameless, secret project” to fight “disinformation.” Their method was “to pressure platforms to enforce their rules, both by removing content or accounts that spread disinformation.” Ball does not mention the *New York Post*'s story about Hunter Biden's [laptop](#), but tech companies, mainstream media outlets, and former intelligence officials leapt in October to call the laptop potential Russian “disinformation,” and to suppress it. Twitter blocked links to the story, and also locked the *Post* out of its account for more than two weeks. The story was later shown to be true, with Hunter Biden announcing — after the election — that he was under FBI investigation.

The group also decided to exploit the violent unrest that spread across the nation in the wake of George Floyd's death in May, and took steps “to harness its momentum for the election without allowing it to be co-opted by politicians.”

Toward the end of the election, Ball reports, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce set aside old disputes to join the AFL-CIO in creating an alliance to reject claims of election fraud. Ball notes that some Republicans also aided in the effort.

As Breitbart News [reported](#) at the time, there was a nationwide left-wing movement to unleash more unrest if Trump claimed victory in a close election. Ball's reporting confirms that the "shadow" effort was coordinating such efforts. She adds that the "national mobilization network" was told to "stand down" after it appeared Biden would be the winner.

**Later, she says, Podhorzer's network decided to make sure there were few counter-demonstrators at the January 6 "Stop the Steal" demonstration in Washington, DC, ensuring that blame for what happened would be placed on Trump alone.**

<https://time.com/5936036/secret-2020-election-campaign/>