

GIGAFACT

Nov. 18, 2022

To: WCIJ Board

From: Dee J. Hall, Coburn Dukehart, Jim Malewitz and Synesthesia Marketing

Wisconsin Watch is participating in a three-month pilot program run by Gigafact, a startup that has developed a format for Fact Briefs — 140-word fact checks that use a “yes/no” format to answer questions, most of them focused on the 2022 midterm election. The format is based on research done by founder Chandran Sankaran, who is a major backer/investor in Gigafact, which has applied for 501(c)3 status. Sankaran also is the founder of a related effort, Repustar, which is a public benefits corporation.

The Fact Briefs are designed to bolster correct claims made on social media and to debunk false ones, to head off the spread of misinformation. We strive to publish Fact Briefs within two days of a claim being made, although due to volume, work schedules and time zone challenges (see below), that goal is not always reached.

Wisconsin Watch is one of [three INN newsrooms participating in the pilot](#), along with the Nevada Independent and Arizona Center for Investigative Reporting. We are being paid \$15,000 to participate in the pilot, which will wrap up in early to mid-December. This amount is sufficient to cover all costs of reporting and at least some, if not all, of the editing.

The next step will be to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot and, along with Gigafact, to determine whether to continue the project in 2023 and beyond. If yes, we will develop a sustainability strategy.

How it works

Both our team and the folks at Gigafact search Twitter, Facebook, Reddit and other platforms for relevant claims, mostly about the 2022 midterm election and candidates. Those become “flags” that we investigate the claims, using publicly available, often primary source data and documents. Although it is not part of Gigafact’s model, our reporters sometimes reach out to primary sources to do their own research if the information they’re looking for is not available online.

As of Wednesday, Nov. 16, we had completed 93 Fact Briefs. Two interns, UW-Madison students Erin Gretzinger and Hope Karnopp, and a freelancer, London School of Economics student Jacob Moser-Alabab, are reporters on the project. Dee is the editor. Coburn created the template to quickly publish the Fact Briefs on our site.

Once briefs are submitted, Dee reviews and edits them and sends them to Gigafact for review to ensure they meet Gigafact’s editorial standards, which include using politically neutral language. In some cases, the claims cannot be verified or disputed, or they cannot be answered cleanly with a yes or no. Those we leave to the side until more information emerges.

Once the brief is approved, Gigafact [publishes the brief on its site](#), and then Dee publishes it on [WisconsinWatch.org](#). Synesthesia Marketing, our social-media contractors, amplify the Fact Briefs across Instagram and Facebook. Jim Malewitz also puts them out on Twitter.



Here's how Fact Briefs look on our website's home page.

Our digital production assistant, Amona Saleh, a UW-Madison intern, is working to publish a backlog of Fact Briefs that we completed earlier in the pilot before Gigafact had developed an efficient way for us to republish them.

Website metrics

In [November](#), our Fact Briefs had 19K unique visitors to our site, with a total of 23K pageviews. Our site traffic fluctuates widely, but for context, in all of October [wisconsinwatch.org](#) had 61,637 page views total. By mid-November, we already had 53,594, so the widely read Fact Briefs do appear to be driving up website traffic.

Our top performing Fact Brief – [Did Tim Michels say that he will end democracy in Wisconsin?](#) – got 5,841 pageviews, which additionally was our top performing story of everything we published in the past month.

Of the top 10 performing stories we published in November, **eight of them were Fact Briefs**. Gigafact measured 1,300 views of Wisconsin Watch Fact Briefs on its site.

Did Tim Michels say that he will end democracy in Wisconsin?



by Jacob Alabab-Moser / Wisconsin Watch

November 7th, 2022 Why you can trust Wisconsin Watch

This Fact Brief is responsive to conversations such as [this one](#).

NO

Tim Michels, the Republican candidate for governor of Wisconsin, said at a campaign stop in Jefferson County on Oct. 31, 2022 that, "Republicans will never lose another election after I'm elected governor."

Michels' spokesperson Brian Fraley said Michels merely meant

Our top performing post for November

Social media metrics

Since we started posting Fact Briefs on Oct. 6, social media engagement has grown over 200% on Instagram and 20% on Facebook.

The engagement/impression rate has grown to 4.3% on Instagram and 3.6% on Facebook. For reference, the average engagement/impression rate across social media is 1-3%, so ours is very high. **This shows we are reaching the right audience who cares about the content we post.**

Number of posts

- Facebook: 30
- Instagram posts: 16
- Instagram stories: 82

Impressions (The number of times our content is displayed, no matter if it is clicked or not)

- Facebook: 9,451
- Instagram posts: 12,646
- Instagram stories: 6,051

Engagements (Likes, comments and shares)

- Facebook: 252
- Instagram posts: 1,243

Post types

- Feed posts
- Stories with polls
- Reels
- Weekly recaps

Top posts by engagement

- [Is the percentage of Black inmates in Wisconsin seven times higher than the percentage of Black citizens in the state?](#)
- [Did leaked data show some elected officials in Wisconsin were members of the Oath Keepers?](#)
- [Did Tim Michels say COVID-19 relief created a class of 'lazy people'?](#)

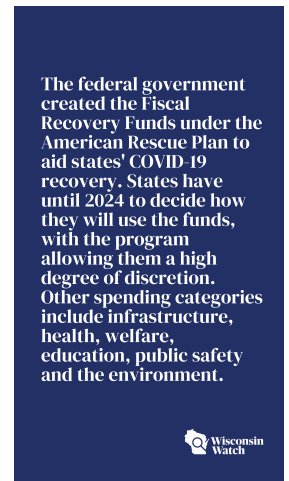
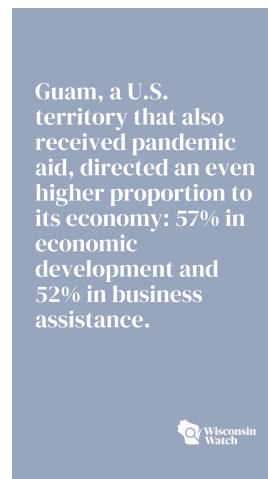
Reel example

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/CkJNw2xM974/?hl=en>

Twitter

We did not compile complete statistics for Fact Briefs on Twitter, but our Fact Brief about attorney general candidate Eric Toney's plans to prosecute abortion cases was the subject of [Wisconsin Watch's top tweet from October to mid-November](#), registering 10,800 impressions.

Instagram story



Weekly recap



How Fact Briefs are used

Some residents used our Fact Briefs to push back against mis- and disinformation...



... or gain useful information about the mechanics of voting.

Or just for fun:



Governor Tony Evers 
@GovEvers



Of course I did.

i **FACT BRIEF** **i**



wisconsinwatch.org
Did Tony Evers say 'holy mackerel' in announcing his win early Wednesday mor...
Yes. Gov. Tony Evers announced his victory in the Wisconsin gubernatorial race in the early morning on Wednesday, Nov. 9, 2022, saying in his acceptance ...

3:49 PM · Nov 11, 2022 · Twitter Web App

150 Retweets 12 Quote Tweets 2,264 Likes