

Musk Staff Say They Were Tricked and Threatened as Part of Elon Musk's Get-Out-the-Vote Effort

America PAC door knockers were flown to Michigan, driven in the back of a U-Haul, and told they'd have to pay hotel bills unless they met unrealistic quotas. One was surprised they were working to elect Donald Trump.

"I was in shock and disbelief," says a paid door knocker flown to [Michigan](#) to help turn out the vote for former [president Donald Trump](#) on behalf of [Elon Musk's America PAC](#).

In Michigan, canvassers and paid door knockers for the former president, contracted by a firm associated with America PAC, have been subjected to poor working conditions: A number of them have been driven around in the back of a seatless U-Haul van, according to video obtained by WIRED, and threatened that their lodging at a local motel wouldn't be paid for if they didn't meet canvassing quotas. One door knocker alleges that they didn't even know they were signing up for anything having to do with Musk or Trump.

A representative for Musk and America PAC did not return a request for comment.

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The contract these door knockers signed with Blitz Canvassing, which is a subcontractor of Musk's America PAC, says they are "expected to maintain a 17-22% engagement rate during the campaign," which is a high target relative to the number of people who typically open their door for a stranger. A group of out-of-state America PAC canvassers were told during a recent team meeting that if they didn't hit their targets, which the door knocker says were more than 1,000 a week on total doors knocked, the organization would stop paying for their motel rooms.

"What's gonna happen is, they're gonna stop paying for these rooms," a manager told the door knockers in an audio recording obtained by WIRED. "And then you're gonna end up having to pay for it yourself. You can't do that with no money." The door knocker also alleges that they were told that they will have to pay for their own flight home.

Blitz Canvassing, which had [received more than \\$9 million from America PAC](#) for presidential campaign canvassing as of October 29, did not immediately reply to a request for comment.



America PAC canvassers in Michigan being driven around in the back of a U-Haul van. (Photo obtained by WIRED)

One of the canvassers, who was flown in from outside the Midwest, tells WIRED they had no idea they would be knocking on doors in support of Trump or that the subcontractor they were working for was part of Elon Musk's voter-turnout operation through America PAC.

"I knew nothing of the job, or much of the job description, other than going door to door and asking the voters who are they voting for," says a door knocker who was one of the people in the back of the van and who is requesting anonymity because they signed a nondisclosure agreement. "Then, after I signed over an NDA, is when I found out we are for Republicans and with Trump."

The door knocker adds that they had "overheard my supervisor and a few others mention Elon Musk" by name, marking the first time they had heard of the billionaire X owner's involvement.

The Trump campaign has largely outsourced its field operation in Michigan to Musk, a move that has come under heavy criticism as previously reported by [WIRED](#). Blitz Canvassing has also reportedly had issues with fake door knocks being flagged by Campaign Sidekick, the glitchy app used by America PAC. In Nevada and Arizona, [up to a quarter of the door interactions were flagged as potential fakes](#) within the app, according to The Guardian. ("Sidekick was never expected to handle the auditing of America PAC's door operation. The reason the PAC is confident in its numbers is because of the auditing procedures each canvassing firm puts in place and the auditing procedures of the PAC writ large," a person familiar with the America PAC operation told The Guardian at the time.)

Field organizing normally does not work this way. The [gold standard for door knocking apps](#) is MiniVAN, and transportation usually involves carpooling with other volunteers or campaign staff offering a ride—preferably, with seat belts.

Initially, the paid door knockers for the Blitz subcontractor didn't have transportation to get around Michigan, since no one in the group had a valid driver's license. On Saturday, October 19, supervisors for the canvassers initially commandeered some Ubers for them to reach their list of addresses. But by Sunday, the door knockers were loaded into a rented U-Haul moving van with no rear seating or seatbelts, in a photo and videos viewed by WIRED. "We were all told our transportation would be handled and we'd be in rental cars. It turned out to be U-Haul vans, and I felt embarrassed and played," the door knocker tells WIRED.

The video from inside the van shows a bumpy ride, with a cage separating the mostly Black door knockers from their driver. The driver also told the group of door knockers that he was in pain and had difficulty driving: "I just had surgery, bro," the U-Haul driver says in another recording obtained by WIRED. "Like half of my foot is cut off."

"I'm scared," the door knocker who spoke to WIRED replies on the recording.

"And all [the manager] is concerned about is how many motherfuckin' doors the bitch got," the driver responds.

The canvassers were then dropped off roughly 40 minutes apart from each other, relying on the mobile app to log their interactions at front doors.

In a contract agreement reviewed by WIRED, door knockers were given specific “performance guidelines” along with a mandate to “keep the GPS function of their personal device turned on during all working hours.” Each knock at the door must be done in 15 seconds or less, and the contractors “must remain on a property for at least 30 seconds.”

The Campaign Sidekick app used by America PAC has severe limitations in its functionality, including the lack of a geo-tracking feature—hence the requirement that canvassers leave GPS services on for their personal devices at all times, according to a contract reviewed by WIRED—forcing them to use “offline walkbooks,” a function of the America PAC app, that don’t offer the support of GPS or real-time upload capabilities.

While this particular group of door knockers was being managed through Blitz Canvassing, screenshots shared with WIRED show America PAC listed in the mobile app they were using to knock on doors.

“Recommended attire includes a red polo shirt with khaki pants or jeans, and closed-toed shoes,” the “attire” section of the contract reads. “Clothing with graffiti, writing, or ripped jeans/shorts is not allowed.”