

# Fact check: In series of false claims, Republican Rep. Lisa McClain says Trump caught Osama bin Laden

 [cnn.com/2022/04/04/politics/fact-check-lisa-mcclain-trump-rally-bin-laden-unemployment-wars-biden/index.html](https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/04/politics/fact-check-lisa-mcclain-trump-rally-bin-laden-unemployment-wars-biden/index.html)

By Daniel Dale , CNN

Michigan Rep. Lisa McClain, a freshman Republican member of Congress, made a series of false claims in a short speech at former President Donald Trump's rally outside Detroit on Saturday – notably including an assertion that Trump, who has endorsed her for re-election, was the president who caught terrorist Osama bin Laden.

McClain's office didn't respond to requests for comment on her false claims in the rally speech, which ran for under six minutes. McClain tweeted Monday: "Joe Biden misspeaks every single day and the media pays no attention to it. Isn't it ironic how I'm under attack for an honest mistake."

She didn't specify, however, which of the claims she was calling "an honest mistake." If she was referring to the remark about bin Laden, that wouldn't explain the three other remarks we debunk below.

## Osama bin Laden

Rattling off what she claimed were Trump accomplishments, McClain said, "Caught Osama bin Laden and Soleimani, al-Baghdadi."

**Facts First:** *McClain's claim about bin Laden is false. Bin Laden, the leader of terrorist group al Qaeda, was killed in Pakistan in a 2011 raid ordered by then-President Barack Obama. Trump took office in 2017.*

Trump did order the 2020 drone strike in Iraq that killed Qasem Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, and he did preside over the 2019 raid in Syria that resulted in the death of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

## Unemployment

Criticizing the state of the economy under President Joe Biden, McClain said, "Unemployment: 40-year high."

**Facts First:** *False again. The unemployment rate is actually near a 52-year low, not at a 40-year high. The rate in March was 3.6% – just a tick higher than the Trump-era low of 3.5%, which was the lowest since late 1969.*

The unemployment rate has fallen significantly under Biden. After rising as high as 14.7% under Trump in 2020, on account of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was 6.4% in January 2021, the month Biden was inaugurated.

McClain's pronunciation of "unemployment" sounded more like "unenployment"; it's theoretically possible she misspoke while thinking of inflation, which is at a 40-year high. But she did not correct herself at the rally, and her office did not respond to requests for comment on the claim.

## Wars

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McClain claimed: "Under President Trump, if my memory serves me correctly, I don't believe we had any wars. We got a war in Ukraine right now."

**Facts First:** *McClain's memory didn't serve her correctly. There were, obviously, wars during the Trump presidency.*

US ground troops fought under Trump in Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq, though Trump did reduce the US military presence in all three countries. A Navy SEAL was killed in a 2017 raid against al Qaeda during Yemen's civil war. The US conducted Trump-era airstrikes on ISIS in Libya amid the civil war there. In Somalia, the US conducted airstrikes and was involved in raids against Al-Shabaab, an al Qaeda affiliate.

And since McClain criticized Biden by citing the war in Ukraine, in which US troops are not involved, it's worth noting that there were wars in the world during the Trump era, too, in which US troops weren't involved.

Trump himself has boasted that he didn't start any new wars. That claim is different than McClain's claim that we didn't even have wars under Trump.

## Who won the 2020 election

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Speaking of the crowd at the rally in Macomb County, McClain said: "But take a look around for one minute. Tell me Joe Biden won? He couldn't have this many people at a rally, the State of the Union combined."

**Facts First:** *Biden was the legitimate winner of the 2020 election. The size of a rally crowd does not say anything about who won the election.*

McClain didn't explicitly say Biden wasn't the real winner in 2020, but she certainly suggested it. Her office didn't respond to requests to explain her position.

McClain voted on January 6 and 7, 2021 against certifying Biden's victories in Arizona and Pennsylvania – joining 146 other Republicans in Congress in objecting to one or both results. Asked in a January 2022 appearance on a Michigan television program whether she has any doubts that Biden won Michigan in 2020 – he won by more than 154,000 votes – she said, "Well, I think there's a lot of doubts."

*This article has been updated to include a Monday tweet from McClain.*

