

August 31, 2018

The Honorable Greg Walden
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Walden,

In anticipation of the hearings with Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey next week, I would like to bring to your attention some important details to consider. According to a recent poll commissioned by the Media Research Center, 65% of self-described conservatives believe social media companies like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are purposely censoring conservatives and conservative ideas from their platforms.

Why is this poll number so important for your hearing on Wednesday with Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey? Tens of millions of Americans, who describe themselves as conservatives, do not trust these social media platforms, such as Twitter, which have the potential to sway elections and influence society.

According to Statista, in the last reported quarter, “the number of monthly active U.S. Twitter users amounted to 68 million. With more than 336 million monthly active users worldwide as of the first quarter of 2018, Twitter is one of the biggest social networks worldwide. The number of U.S. Twitter users is projected to surpass 70 million in 2020.”

The influence of Twitter on its own is not the issue. It is the influence Twitter possesses, in conjunction with its institutional bias against conservatives, which is so dangerous. As of the release of MRC’s Censorship report in April of this year, 12 of the 25 U.S. members of Twitter’s Trust and Safety Council — which helps guide its policies — were liberal, and only one was conservative. Anti-conservative groups like GLAAD and the Anti-Defamation League are part of the board. As far as we know, there are no well-known conservative groups represented on this council.

As we now know through James O’Keefe’s Project Veritas, high level Twitter employees deliberately targeted conservatives to silence them on the platform. Some of the more prominent examples include:

- In a conversation with former Twitter Content Review Agent Mo Norai on May 16, 2017, we learned that in the past Twitter would manually ban or censor pro-Trump or

conservative content. When asked about the process of banning accounts, Norai said, *“On stuff like that it was more discretion on your viewpoint, I guess how you felt about a particular matter...”*

- When asked to clarify if that process was automated Norai confirmed that it was not: *“Yeah, if they said this is: ‘Pro-Trump’ I don’t want it because it offends me, this, that. And I say I banned this whole thing, and it goes over here and they are like, ‘Oh you know what? I don’t like it too. You know what? Mo’s right, let’s go, let’s carry on, what’s next?’”*
- Norai also revealed that more left-leaning content would go through their selection process with less political scrutiny, *“It would come through checked and then I would be like ‘Oh you know what? This is okay. Let it go.’”*
- Norai explained that this selection process wasn’t exactly Twitter policy, but rather unwritten rules given from the top: *“A lot of unwritten rules, and being that we’re in San Francisco, we’re in California, very liberal, a very blue state. You had to be... I mean as a company you can’t really say it because it would make you look bad, but behind closed doors are lots of rules.” “There was, I would say... Twitter was probably about 90% Anti-Trump, maybe 99% Anti-Trump.”*
- In a San Francisco bar on January 5, Pranay Singh detailed how the shadow-banning algorithms targeting right-leaning groups are engineered: *“Yeah you look for Trump, or America, and you have like five thousand keywords to describe a redneck. Then you look and parse all the messages, all the pictures, and then you look for stuff that matches that stuff.”*
- When asked if the majority of the algorithms are targeted against conservative or liberal users of Twitter, Singh said, *“I would say majority of it are for Republicans.”*

And these are but the examples we know of. Americans are distrustful of Twitter because they have good reason to be. Their institutional bias against conservatives combined with their influence is a dangerous combination.

The American people deserve answers and transparency from Twitter. Is Twitter using its platform to systematically silence and censor voices it disagrees with or is it taking steps to fix the platform and culture at Twitter to encourage dialogue?

The Media Research Center is leading a coalition representing more than 40 conservative organizations concerned about the censorship of conservative voices on social media. The organizations in this coalition represent tens of millions of conservative Americans. These Americans expect that social media companies will do the right thing. Conservatives also expect that their political leaders will hold the leadership in these companies accountable. During such a critical political season, it is crucial that the response Congress and social media executives provide alleviate the concerns of conservative voters, and bring direction for pending changes in these company policies.

Sincerely,

L. Brent Bozell III

Founder and President