

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-5051
<https://oversight.house.gov>

September 11, 2024

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Vice President Kamala D. Harris
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden and Vice President Harris:

In the interest of good government, and to ensure the integrity of the upcoming national election, I am writing to request information on any information suppression campaigns in which the Administration is currently engaged. I urge you to cease and desist any such activity, and ensure that all employees of the Executive Branch refrain from exerting political pressure on social media companies to censor content in accord with White House preferences.

On August 26, 2024, Meta founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg posted a frank letter to House Judiciary Chairman Jim Jordan that stated: “In 2021, senior officials from the Biden Administration, including the White House, repeatedly pressured our team for months to censor certain COVID-19 content, including humor and satire, and expressed a lot of frustration with our teams when we didn’t agree.”

Previously, in August 2022, Mr. Zuckerberg confirmed that Facebook’s censorship of the *New York Post* story about Hunter Biden’s laptop followed warnings from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) that Facebook should be cautious of misinformation and foreign interference ahead of the 2020 election.¹

Similarly, Twitter’s decision to censor the same *New York Post* story about Hunter Biden’s laptop followed the company’s close relationship with state and federal officials—including the FBI.² On February 8, 2023, the Committee held a hearing titled “Protecting Speech from Government Interference and Social Media Bias, Part 1: Twitter’s Role in Suppressing the Biden Laptop Story” to investigate how and why Twitter suppressed the *New*

¹ Jared Gans, *Zuckerberg Tells Rogan Facebook Suppressed Hunter Biden Laptop Story after FBI Warning*, THE HILL (Aug. 26, 2022).

² *Protecting Speech from Government Interference and Social Media Bias, Part 1*: Hearing Before H. Comm. On Oversight & Accountability, 118th Cong. (Feb. 8, 2023).

York Post story in the lead-up to the 2020 Presidential election, and how internal content moderation policies at Twitter had been regularly enforced.³

Notably, the censorship of the Hunter Biden laptop story directly impacted voting results, according to a poll of Biden voters in seven swing states that found 17 percent of them would have switched their votes had they been aware of the story.⁴

Four years on, the Nation cannot afford a repeat of this scenario.

Mr. Zuckerberg's latest disclosure arrives at a time when the Presidential election contest is getting into full swing—and amid rising concerns of the political influence of social media companies. Troubling revelations of how Facebook and Google sites responded to users seeking information on the July 13, 2024, assassination attempt of President Trump in Butler County, Pennsylvania prompted committee Chairman James Comer to write these companies on August 14, 2024 to better understand how and why both companies chose to limit visibility of information about the attempt on the President's life.

From the outset, your Administration has advertised its willingness to manipulate the content of social media sites. On July 5, 2021, then-White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki stated at a press briefing that the Administration was “flagging problematic posts for Facebook that spread disinformation,” and the next day clarified that the White House was in regular contact with social media companies to raise concerns about certain types of information on their platforms.⁵

The White House has not apologized for this activity or indicated that it would cease and desist from engaging in such behavior.

In contrast, House Republicans have sought to prevent political interference with social media sites. Soon after assuming the House Majority last year, the Oversight Committee held the hearing cited above concerning the role of the FBI in convincing media outlets to bury the Hunter Biden laptop story in the run up to the 2020 Presidential election. The Committee then approved on February 28, 2023, the Protecting Speech from Government Interference Act (H.R. 140), which I cosponsored. The bill expressly prohibits federal employees from attempting to censor private speech, including on social media sites. The bill was approved by the full House on March 9, 2023.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Tim Murtaugh, *Media's suppression of Hunter Biden's laptop was election interference*, WASHINGTON TIMES (Mar. 24, 2022).

⁵ Jen Psaki, Press Secretary, White House, Press Briefings (July 15, 2021 and July 16, 2021).

Since the Senate failed to take up the legislation, the door has remained open for further political interference from the Executive Branch—including during the runup to a national election.

Therefore, on behalf of the American people, the Subcommittee seeks to learn about information suppression activities in which the Administration is currently engaged.

To assist its efforts, the Subcommittee requests the White House produce the following documents and information, covering the time period January 1, 2024, to the present, as soon as possible, but no later than September 25, 2024:

1. All communications with social media companies and any private sector entity, concerning the concealment or suppression of information on their sites; and
2. All communications between federal employees related to any discussion of concealment or suppression of information with social media companies and any private sector entity.

To arrange for the delivery of responsive documents or ask any related follow-up questions, please contact the Committee on Oversight and Accountability Majority staff at (202) 225-5074. Attached are instructions for producing the documents and information to the Committee.

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X.

Thank you in advance for cooperating with this inquiry.

Sincerely,



Nancy Mace
Chair
Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Information
Technology, and Government Innovation

cc: The Honorable Gerry Connolly, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and Government Innovation