

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 30, 2024

Mark Zuckerberg
Chief Executive Officer
Meta Platforms, Inc,
1 Hacker Way
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Linda Yaccarino
Chief Executive Officer
X Corp.
1355 Market Street
San Francisco, CA 94103

Shou Zi Chew
Chief Executive Officer
TikTok LLC
5800 Bristol Parkway
Suite 100
Culver City, CA 90230

Sundar Pichai
Chief Executive Officer
Google
1600 Amphitheater Parkway
Mountain View, CA 94043

Adam Mosseri
Head of Instagram
Instagram
1 Hacker Way
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Evan Spiegel
Chief Executive Officer
Snap, Inc.
2772 Donald Douglas Loop North
Santa Monica, California 90405

Neal Mohan
Chief Executive Officer
YouTube, LLC
901 Cherry Avenue
San Bruno, CA 94066

Satya Nadella
Chief Executive Officer
Microsoft Corporation
1 Microsoft Way
Redmond, WA 98052

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg, Ms. Yaccarino, Mr. Chew, Mr. Pichai, Mr. Mosseri, Mr. Spiegel, Mr. Mohan, and Mr. Nadella:

We write to your platforms as concerned Members of Congress, seeking further information about your preparation for and response to the spread of misinformation and disinformation, or the potential incitement of violence on your platforms leading up to the 2024 elections. We have already seen how posts with disinformation have spread on the major social media platforms both in the United States and across the globe during election cycles.¹ We continue to be concerned with each of your companies' ability to react efficiently and effectively to misinformation and disinformation, or to any potential incitement of violence occurring on your platforms.

As the technology on social media platforms rapidly expands, companies must redouble their efforts to combat issues that threaten our democracy. A recent study from NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights states that the "leading tech-related threat to this year's elections, however, stems not from the creation of content with AI, but from a more familiar source: the distribution of false, hateful, and violent content via social media platforms."² This should come as no surprise to social media companies,

¹ <https://bhr.stern.nyu.edu/publication/digital-risks-to-the-2024-elections-safeguarding-democracy-in-the-era-of-disinformation/>

² <https://bhr.stern.nyu.edu/publication/digital-risks-to-the-2024-elections-safeguarding-democracy-in-the-era-of-disinformation/>

who now have years of experience with mis- and disinformation spreading ahead of and during election cycles.

The same Stern report states that each of your companies have “retreated from some of their past commitments to promote election integrity.”³ Unfortunately, we have witnessed almost every major platform roll back their election policies, even in the face of blatant attacks on our democracy fomenting. This almost universal reversion on the issue of combating election mis- and disinformation is incredibly troubling.

As the Washington Post reported, “the history of social media teaches us that the people who use online platforms respond to the incentives those platforms create.”⁴ Without proper incentives, bad actors will continue to spread false content they know to be divisive. Instead of properly evaluating the risk of election interference or political violence, companies have allowed this content to flourish. YouTube made a decision to resume videos that deny the 2020 election, undoing their prior commitment to election integrity.⁵ Meta similarly resumed allowing political ads that claim stolen elections.⁶ And almost every major social media company reinstated Donald Trump’s account after previously banning him for violating their community standards.⁷ After witnessing the role that false or misleading content can play in our elections, we know our country cannot afford to have platforms backslide on their promises.

Even more concerning is the fact that most of your companies have cut their trust and safety teams, sometimes entirely, and have terminated employees handling election integrity. After the 2022 elections, Meta, Discord, Snap, and other platforms reduced their elections team dramatically.⁸ X has cut around 1,000 Trust and Safety positions since 2022, with owner Elon Musk commenting, “Yeah, they’re gone” about the elections unit⁹¹⁰. These teams are especially needed to combat non-English content, since past elections have shown that election falsehoods disproportionately impact non-English speaking communities and communities of color.¹¹

In addition to cutting internal teams, platforms have not increased their transparency for external groups who can aid in monitoring election information.¹² X removed free access to their data, once used readily by researchers. Other platforms, such as TikTok have made the terms of service for their application programming interface so strict that researchers are hesitant to accept them.¹³ And, most recently, Meta shut down CrowdTangle, a tool used by researchers to monitor misinformation spreading on Facebook.¹⁴

The Bipartisan Policy Center in a report noted that, in order to fully support our democracy, social media platforms need to incorporate their election efforts into their permanent plans and community guidelines.¹⁵ Over 120 civil rights and democracy groups have called on the major social media companies to “consistently enforce civic integrity policies during both election and non-election cycles.”¹⁶

³ <https://bhr.stern.nyu.edu/publication/digital-risks-to-the-2024-elections-safeguarding-democracy-in-the-era-of-disinformation/>

⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2024/02/21/meta-is-downplaying-political-content-heres-what-that-really-means/>

⁵ <https://www.npr.org/2023/06/02/1179864026/youtube-will-no-longer-take-down-false-claims-about-u-s-elections>

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/nov/15/facebook-ads-2020-election-rigged-stolen-instagram-policy>

⁷ <https://bhr.stern.nyu.edu/publication/digital-risks-to-the-2024-elections-safeguarding-democracy-in-the-era-of-disinformation/>

⁸ <https://cyberscoop.com/civil-society-groups-election-integrity-social-media/>

⁹ https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2024-01-31_-_qfr_responses_-_yaccarino.pdf

¹⁰ <https://x.com/elonmusk/status/1707147926789554422>

¹¹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/08/15/disinformation-about-us-elections-targets-communities-color>

¹² <https://bhr.stern.nyu.edu/publication/digital-risks-to-the-2024-elections-safeguarding-democracy-in-the-era-of-disinformation/>

¹³ <https://www.bgov.com/next/news/S1CO9IDWRGG0>

¹⁴ <https://apnews.com/article/meta-crowdtangle-research-misinformation-shutdown-facebook-977ece074b99adddb4887bf719f2112a>

¹⁵ <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/report/how-to-protect-elections-online/>

¹⁶ <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/report/how-to-protect-elections-online/>

While the impetus of this letter is the 2024 election, political and election-related mis- and disinformation persists even between elections, so we are also urging your companies to commit to taking action on election and political misinformation year-round, not just in the leadup to elections.

Given the timeline, we would appreciate your swift attention to this matter. Please provide written answers to the following questions:

- Will your company be changing your election integrity policies between now and the 2024 U.S. general election? If so, please describe the reasoning for changes so close to the election.
- How will your company be more transparent in enforcement of its community guidelines regarding election integrity and transparent with the public about actions it has taken?
- Will your company commit to sharing data and metrics on the effectiveness of your enforcement systems in relation to US elections and political speech?
- How will your company address mis- and disinformation made by political actors or verified accounts, and how will they be treated differently, if at all, compared to ordinary users?
- Will your company commit to keeping these election integrity plans in place indefinitely and keeping Congress fully informed about potential changes?

Thank you for your time and attention on this matter.

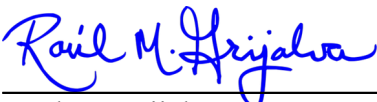
Sincerely,



Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Robert Garcia
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress