TWITTER: TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

SEPTEMBER 5, 2018

Serial No. 115–162

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[1] The responses to Mr. Dorsey's questions for the record can be found at: https://docs.house.gov/meetings/IF/IF00/20180905/108642/HHRG-115-IF00-Wstate-DorseyJ-20180905-SD005.pdf.

[2] The information can be found at: https://docs.house.gov/meetings/IF/IF00/20180905/108642/HHRG-115-IF00-20180905-SD015.pdf.

[3] The information can be found at: https://docs.house.gov/meetings/IF/IF00/20180905/108642/HHRG-115-IF00-20180905-SD011.pdf.

TWITTER: TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2018

House of Representatives,
Committee on Energy and Commerce,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 1:30 p.m., in room 2123 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Greg Walden (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Members present: Representatives Walden, Barton, Upton, Shimkus, Burgess, Scalise, Latta, McMorris Rodgers, Harper, Lance, Guthrie, Olson, McKinley, Kinzinger, Griffith, Bilirakis, Johnson, Long, Bucshon, Flores, Brooks, Mullin, Hudson, Collins, Cramer, Walberg, Walters, Costello, Carter, Duncan, Pallone, Rush, Engel, Green, DeGette, Doyle, Schakowsky, Butterfield, Matsui, Castor, Sarbanes, McNerney, Welch, Luján, Tonko, Clarke, Loebsack, Schrader, Kennedy, Cárdenas, Ruiz, Peters, and Dingell.

Staff present: Jon Adame, Policy Coordinator, Communications & Technology; Jennifer Barblan, Chief Counsel, Oversight & Investigations; Mike Bloomquist, Deputy Staff Director; Karen Christian, General Counsel; Robin Colwell, Chief Counsel, Communications & Technology; Jordan Davis, Director of Policy and External Affairs; Melissa Froelich, Chief Counsel, Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection; Adam Fromm, Director of Outreach and Coalitions; Ali Fulling, Legislative Clerk, Oversight & Investigations, Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection; Elena Hernandez, Press Secretary; Zach Hunter, Director of Communications; Paul Jackson, Professional Staff, Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection; Peter Kielty, Deputy General Counsel; Bijan Koohmaraie, Counsel, Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection; Tim Kurth, Senior Professional Staff, Communications & Technology; Milly Lothian, Press Assistant and Digital Coordinator; Mark Ratner, Policy Coordinator; Austin Stonebraker, Press Assistant; Madeline Vey, Policy Coordinator, Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection; Jessica Wilkerson, Professional Staff, Oversight & Investigations; Greg Zerzan, Counsel, Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection; Michelle Ash, Minority Chief Counsel, Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection; Jeff Carroll, Minority Staff Director; Jennifer Epperson, Minority FCC Detailee; Evan Gilbert, Minority Press Assistant; Lisa Goldman, Minority Counsel; Tiffany Guarascio, Minority Deputy Staff Director and Chief Health Advisor; Carolyn Hann, Minority FTC Detailee; Alex Hoehn-Saric, Minority Chief Counsel, Communications and Technology; Jerry Leverich, Minority Counsel; Jourdan Lewis, Minority Staff Assist-

ant; Dan Miller, Minority Policy Analyst; Caroline Paris-Behr, Minority Policy Analyst; Kaitlyn Peel, Minority Digital Director; Andrew Souvall, Minority Director of Communications, Outreach and Member Services; and C.J. Young, Minority Press Secretary.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. GREG WALDEN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF OREGON

Mr. WALDEN. The Committee on Energy and Commerce will now come to order. The chair now recognizes himself for 5 minutes for purposes of an opening statement.

Good afternoon, and thank you, Mr. Dorsey, for being before the Energy and Commerce Committee today.

The company you and your co-creators founded 12 years ago has become one of the most recognizable businesses in the world. Twitter has reached that rarified place where using the service has become a verb, instantly recognized around the globe. Just as people can Google a question or Gram a photo, everyone knows what it means to tweet one's thoughts or ideas.

The list of superlatives to describe Twitter certainly exceeds 280 characters. It is one of the most downloaded apps in the world, one of the most visited websites.

It is one of the world's premier sources for breaking news. Its power and reach are so great that society-changing events like the Arab Spring have been dubbed the Twitter Revolution.

The service allows anyone with access to the internet the power to broadcast his or her views to the world. It's truly revolutionary in the way that the Gutenberg press was revolutionary.

It helps set information free. It allows ideas to propagate and challenge established ways of thinking. Twitter's success and growth rate has been extraordinary but it is not without controversy.

The service has been banned at various times and in various countries, such as China and Iran. Here in the United States the company itself has come under criticism for impeding the ability of some users to post information, remove tweets, and other content moderation practices.

For instance, in July it was reported that some politically prominent users were no longer appearing as auto-populated options in certain search results. This led to concerns that the service might be "shadow banning" some users in an attempt to limit their visibility on the site.

Now, this was hardly the first instance of a social media service taking actions which appeared to minimize or de-emphasize certain viewpoints, and in the most recent case, Twitter has stated that the action were not intentional but, rather, the result of algorithms designed to maintain a more civil tone on the site.

Twitter has also directed the issue of "bots," or automated accounts, not controlled by one person. Even the removal of these bots from the service raise questions about how the bots were identified because the number of followers someone has on Twitter has real economic value in our economy.

We recognize the complexity of trying to manage your service, which posts over half a million tweets a day. I believe you were once temporarily suspended from Twitter due to an internal error

yourself. We do not want to lose sight of a few fundamental facts. Humans are building the algorithms, humans are making decisions about how to implement Twitter's terms of service, and humans are recommending changes to Twitter's policies.

Humans can make mistakes. How Twitter manages those circumstances as critically important in an environment where algorithms to decide what we see in our home feed, ads, and search suggestions on.

It is critical that users are confident that you're living up to your own promises. According to Twitter rules, the company believes that everyone should have the power to create and share ideas and information instantly without barriers.

Well, that's a noble mission and one that as a private company you certainly do not have to take on. The fact that you have done so has enriched the world, changed societies, and given an outlet to voices that might otherwise never be heard.

We, and the American people, want to be reassured that you're continuing to live up to that mission. We hope you can help us better understand how Twitter decides when to suspend a user or ban them from the service and what you do to ensure that such decisions are made without undue bias.

We hope you can help us better understand what role automated algorithms have in this process and how those algorithms are designed to ensure consistent outcomes and a fair process.

The company that you and your co-founders created plays an instrumental role in sharing news and information across the globe. We appreciate your willingness to appear before us to today and to answer our questions.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time and recognize Mr. Pallone from New Jersey for an opening statement.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Walden follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. GREG WALDEN

Good afternoon and thank you Mr. Dorsey for appearing before the Energy and Commerce Committee today.

When you and your co-creators founded Twitter in 2006, you probably never envisioned the issues we are going to discuss today: so-called "shadow-banning," misinformation, abuse, and bots, to name a few. Twelve years later, Twitter bears a great responsibility to its users, including nearly 70 million Americans.

Let's be clear from the start: Twitter's algorithms have made mistakes and its methods for moderating and policing content have been opaque to consumers. We're holding this hearing to give you the opportunity to better explain your company's actions to Congress, and, more importantly, to the American people.

I do want to take a moment to recognize that you have worked in recent weeks to reach out to conservative audiences and discuss publicly the issues your company is facing. Earlier this year, you and I had a productive conversation here in Washington, and have since stayed in contact.

As Google, Apple, Facebook and others grapple with their own controversies, I commend you as a leader among your peers in understanding the importance of substantive dialogue with Congress and the American people. I reiterate again my open invitation to other tech CEOs. Testifying in good faith before a scandal happens can go a long way towards building trust and goodwill.

Now, we recognize the complexity of trying to manage your service, which posts over half-a-billion tweets a day. We also understand that humans build Twitter's algorithms, humans make decisions about Twitter's Terms of Service, and humans recommend changes to Twitter's policies.

And people can make mistakes.

How Twitter manages those circumstances is critically important in an environment where algorithms are set up to decide what we see in our newsfeed, ads, search suggestions, and more.

It should now be quite clear that even well-intentioned algorithms can have unintended consequences. Prominent Republicans, including multiple Members of Congress and the Chairwoman of the Republican Party have seen their Twitter presences temporarily minimized in recent months, due to what you have claimed was a mistake in the algorithm.

When you boil it down, a set of data inputs and algorithmic outcomes can shape the national conversation in the time it takes for a tweet to go viral. That's why this committee takes allegations of bias and algorithms gone awry so seriously, and you should, too.

It takes years to build trust, but it only takes 280 characters to lose it.

It is critical that you are living up to your own promises and the expectations you set out for consumers. According to Twitter's rules, the company believes "that everyone should have the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers."

That is a noble mission, and one that has enriched the world, changed societies, and given an outlet to voices that might otherwise never be heard.

It has also brought on many of the challenges we're here to discuss today.

It's worth noting that Twitter's content moderation decisions are enabled by Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, landmark legislation coauthored by this committee in 1996, and since widely credited as "the law that gave us the modern internet." Through this legislation, Congress entrusted you with broad authority to ban, promote, or deprioritize content as you see fit, without taking the kind of responsibility for what appears on your website that a publisher must.

But as we saw recently with the enactment of the Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act, the Section 230 safe harbor was not intended to be an unlimited free pass. It can evolve, and Congress must maintain oversight of how the safe harbor is being used and the appropriateness of the moderating decisions it enables.

Mr. Dorsey, it is now up to you to assure the American people how Twitter continues to live up to its mission, not only through public statements but through action. We hope you can help us better understand how Twitter decides when to suspend a user or ban them from the service, and what you do to ensure that such decisions are made without undue bias. We hope you can help us better understand what role algorithms have in this process, and how those algorithms are designed to ensure consistent outcomes and a fair process.

We also expect to hear what you are doing to implement change and make Twitter more transparent for consumers.

We appreciate your willingness to appear before us today and we thank you for taking the time to help us understand this important topic.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR., A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY

Mr. PALLONE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Over the past few weeks, President Trump and many Republicans have peddled conspiracy theories about Twitter and other social media platforms to with up their base and fundraise. I fear the Republicans are using this hearing for those purposes instead of addressing the serious issues raised by social media platforms that affect Americans' everyday lives.

Twitter is a valuable platform for disseminating news, information, and viewpoints. It can be a tool for bringing people together and allows one to reach many. In places like Iran and Ukraine, Twitter was used to organize and give voice to the concerns of otherwise voiceless individuals. Closer to home, Twitter and hashtags like #StayWoke, #MeToo, and #NetNeutrality have fostered important conversations and supported larger social movements that are changing our society.

But Twitter has a darker side. Far too many Twitter users still face bullying and trolling attacks. Tweets designed to threaten, belittle, demean, and silence individuals can have a devastating effect, sometimes even driving people to suicide, and while Twitter has taken some steps to protect users and enable reporting, more needs to be done.

Bad actors have co-opted Twitter and other social media platforms to spread disinformation and sow divisions in our society. For example, Alex Jones used Twitter to amplify harmful and dangerous lies such as those regarding the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. Others have used the platform to deny the existence of the Holocaust, disseminate racial supremacy theories, and spread false information about terrorism, natural disasters, and more.

When questioned about this disinformation, Twitter's CEO, Jack Dorsey, said the truth will win out in the end. But there is reason to doubt that, in my opinion. According to a recent study published by the MIT Media Lab, false rumors on Twitter traveled "farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than the truth," with true claims taking about six times as long to reach the same number of people, and that's dangerous.

And countries like Russia and Iran are taking advantage of this to broadly disseminate propaganda and false information. Beyond influencing elections, foreign agents are actively trying to turn groups of Americans against each other and these countries are encouraging conflict to sow division and hatred by targeting topics that generate intense feelings such as race, religion, and politics.

Unfortunately, the actions of President Trump have made the situation worse. Repeatedly, the president uses Twitter to bully and belittle people, calling them names like "dog," "clown," "spoiled brat," "son of a bitch," "enemies," and "loser." He routinely tweets false statements designed to mislead Americans and foster discord, and the president's actions coarsen the public debate and feed distrust within our society.

President Trump has demonstrated that the politics of division are good for fund raising and rousing his base and, sadly, Republicans are now following his lead instead of criticizing the president for behavior that would not be tolerated even from a child. As reported in the news, the Trump campaign and the Republican majority leader have used the supposed anti-conservative bias online to fund raise. This hearing appears to be just one more mechanism to raise money and generate outrage, and it appears Republicans are desperately trying to rally the base by fabricating a problem that simply does not exist.

Regardless of the Republicans' intentions for this hearing, Twitter and other social media platforms must do more to regain and maintain the public trust. Bullying, the spread of disinformation and malicious foreign influence continue. Twitter policies have been inconsistent and confusing. The company's enforcement seems to chase the latest headline as opposed to addressing systemic problems. Twitter and other social media platforms must establish clear policies to address the problems discussed today, provide tools to users and then swiftly and fairly enforce those policies, and

those policies should apply equally to the president, politicians, administration officials, celebrities, and the teenager down the street.

It's long past time for Twitter and other social media companies to stop allowing their platforms to be tools of discord of spreading false information and of foreign government manipulation.

So I thank you for having the hearing, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pallone follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

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Twitter is a valuable platform for disseminating news, information, and viewpoints. It can be a tool for bringing people together and allows one to reach many. In places like Iran and Ukraine, Twitter was used to organize and give voice to the concerns of otherwise voiceless individuals. Closer to home, Twitter and hashtags like Stay Woke, Me Too, and Net Neutrality have fostered important conversations and supported larger social movements that are changing our society.

But Twitter has a darker side. Far too many Twitter users still face bullying and trolling attacks. Tweets designed to threaten, belittle, demean, and silence individuals can have devastating effects, sometimes even driving people to suicide. While Twitter has taken some steps to protect users and enable reporting, more needs to be done.

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When questioned about this disinformation Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey said the truth will win out in the end, but there is reason to doubt that. According to a recent study published by the MIT Media Lab, false rumors on Twitter traveled "farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than the truth" with true claims taking about six times as long to reach the same number of people. That's dangerous.

And countries like Russia and Iran are taking advantage of this to broadly disseminate propaganda and false information. Beyond influencing elections, foreign agents are actively trying to turn groups of Americans against each other. These countries are encouraging conflict to sow division and hatred by targeting topics that generate intense feelings such as race, religion, and politics.

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It's long past time for Twitter and other social media companies to stop allowing their platforms to be tools of discord, of spreading false information, and of foreign government manipulation.

Thank you, I yield back.

Mr. WALDEN. I thank the gentleman.

The chair now recognizes Mr. Dorsey for purposes of an opening statement. We appreciate your being here and feel free to go ahead.

STATEMENT OF JACK DORSEY, CEO, TWITTER, INC.

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you.;

Thank you, Chairman Walden, Ranking Member Pallone, and the committee for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Twitter to the American people.

I look forward to our conversation about our commitment to impartiality, to transparency, and to accountability.

If it's OK with all of you, I'd like to read you something I personally wrote as I thought about these issues. I am also going to tweet it out right now.

I want to start by making something very clear. We don't consider political viewpoints, perspectives, or party affiliation in any of our policies or enforcement decisions, period. Impartiality is our guiding principle. Let me explain why. We believe many people use Twitter as a digital public square. They gather from all around the world to see what's happening and have a conversation about what they see. Twitter cannot rightly serve as public square if it's constructed around the personal opinions of its makers.

We believe a key driver of a thriving public square is the fundamental human right of freedom of opinion and expression. Our early and strong defense of open and free exchange has enabled Twitter to be the platform for activists, marginalized communities, whistle blowers, journalists, governments, and the most influential people around the world. Twitter will always default to open and free exchange.

A default to free expression left unchecked can generate risks and dangers for people. It's important Twitter distinguishes between people's opinions and their behaviors and disarms behavior intending to silence another person or adversely interfere with their universal human rights.

We build our policies and rules with the principle of impartiality, objective criteria rather than on the basis of bias, prejudice, or preferring the benefit to one person over another for improper reasons.

If we learn we failed to create impartial outcomes, we immediately work to fix. In the spirit of accountability and transparency, recently we failed our intended impartiality.

Our algorithms were unfairly filtering 600,000 accounts, including some members of Congress, from our search auto complete and latest results. We fixed it, but how did it happen?

Our technology was using a decision-making criteria that considers the behavior of people following these accounts. We decided that wasn't fair and we corrected it.

We will always improve our technology and algorithms to drive healthier usage and measure the impartiality of those outcomes.

Bias in algorithms is an important topic. Our responsibility is to understand, measure, and reduce accidental bias due to factors

such as the quality of the data used to train our algorithms. This is an extremely complex challenge facing everyone applying artificial intelligence.

For our part, machine-learning teams at Twitter are experimenting with these techniques in developing roadmaps to ensure present and future machine-learning models uphold a high standard when it comes to algorithmic fairness.

It's an important step towards ensuring impartiality. Looking at the data, we analyzed tweets sent by all members of the House and Senate and found no statistically significant difference between the number of times a tweet by a Democrat is viewed versus a Republican, even after all of our ranking and filtering of tweets has been applied.

Also, there is a distinction we need to make clear. When people follow you, you've earned that audience and we have a responsibility to make sure they can see your tweets. We do not have a responsibility nor you a right to amplify your tweets to an audience that doesn't follow you.

What our algorithms decide to show in shared spaces like search results is based on thousands of signals that constantly learn and evolve over time.

Some of those signals are engagement. Some are the number of abuse reports. We balance all of these to prevent gaming our system.

We acknowledge the growing concern people have of the power held by companies like Twitter. We believe it's dangerous to ask Twitter to regulate opinions or be the arbiter of truth.

We'd rather be judged by the impartiality of outcomes and criticized when we fail this principle.

In closing, when I think of our work, I think of my mom and dad in St. Louis, a Democrat and a Republican. We had lots of frustrating and heated debates. But looking back, I appreciate I was able to hear and challenge different perspectives and I also appreciate I felt safe to do so.

We believe Twitter helps people connect to something bigger than themselves, show all the amazing things that are happening in the world, and all the things we need to acknowledge and address.

We are constantly learning how to make it freer and healthier for all to participate.

Thank you, all.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Dorsey follows:.

United States House Committee on Energy and Commerce

Testimony of Jack Dorsey
Chief Executive Officer
Twitter, Inc.

September 5, 2018

Chairman Walden, Ranking Member Pallone, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee today so I may speak to you and the American people.

Twitter's purpose is to serve the public conversation. We are an American company that serves our global audience by focusing on the people who use our service, and we put them first in every step we take. Twitter is used as a global town square, where people from around the world come together in an open and free exchange of ideas. We must be a trusted and healthy place that supports free and open discussion.

Twitter has publicly committed to improving the collective health, openness, and civility of public conversation on our platform. Twitter's health is measured by how we help encourage more healthy debate, conversations, and critical thinking. Conversely, abuse, malicious automation, and manipulation detracts from the health of our platform. We are committed to hold ourselves publicly accountable towards progress of our health initiative.

Today, I hope my testimony before the Committee will demonstrate the challenges that we are tackling as a global platform. Twitter is approaching these challenges with a simple question: How do we earn more trust from the people using our service? We know the way earn more trust around how we make decisions on our platform is to be as transparent as possible. We want to communicate how our platform works in a clear and straightforward way.

There are other guiding objectives we consider to be core to our company. We must ensure that all voices can be heard. We must continue to make improvements to our service so that everyone feels safe participating in the public conversation – whether they are speaking or simply listening. And we must ensure that people can trust in the credibility of the conversation and its participants.

Let me be clear about one important and foundational fact: Twitter does not use political ideology to make any decisions, whether related to ranking content on our service or how we enforce our rules. We believe strongly in being impartial, and we strive to enforce our rules impartially. We do not shadowban anyone based on political ideology. In fact, from a simple business perspective and to serve the public conversation, Twitter is incentivized to keep all voices on the platform.

Twitter plays an important role in our democracy and governments around the world. In the United States, all 100 Senators, 50 governors, and nearly every member of the House of Representatives currently reach their constituents through Twitter accounts. Our service has enabled millions of people around the globe to engage in local, national, and global conversations on a wide range of issues of civic importance. We also partner with news organizations on a regular basis to live-stream congressional hearings and political events, providing the public access to important developments in our democracy. The notion that we would silence any political perspective is antithetical to our commitment to free expression.

My testimony today will provide important information about our service: (1) an explanation of our commitment to improve the health on Twitter; (2) the algorithms that shape the experience of individuals who use Twitter; (3) an update on Twitter's work on Russian interference in the 2016 elections; and (4) information on recent malicious activity Twitter saw on the platform.

I. TWITTER'S COMMITMENT TO HEALTH

Twitter is committed to help increase the collective health, openness, and civility of public conversation, and to hold ourselves publicly accountable towards progress. At Twitter, health refers to our overall efforts to reduce malicious activity on the service, including malicious automation, spam, and fake accounts. Twitter has focused on measuring health by evaluating how to encourage more healthy debate, and critical thinking.

The platform provides instant, public, global messaging and conversation, however, we understand the real-world negative consequences that arise in certain circumstances. Twitter is determined to find holistic and fair solutions. We acknowledge that abuse, harassment, troll armies, manipulation through bots and human-coordination, misinformation campaigns, and increasingly divisive echo chambers occur.

We have learned from situations where people have taken advantage of our service and our past inability to address it fast enough. Historically, Twitter focused most of our efforts on removing content against our rules. Today, we have a more comprehensive framework that will help encourage more healthy debate, conversations, and critical thinking.

We believe an important component of improving the health on Twitter is to measure the health of conversation that occurs on the platform. This is because in order to improve something, one must be able to measure it. By measuring our contribution to the overall health of the public conversation, we believe we can more holistically approach our impact on the world for years to come.

Earlier this year, Twitter began collaborating with the non-profit research center Cortico and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Media Lab on exploring how to measure aspects of the health of the public sphere. As a starting point, Cortico proposed an initial set of health indicators for the United States (with the potential to expand to other nations), which are aligned with four principles of a healthy public sphere. Those include:

- Shared Attention: Is there overlap in what we are talking about?

- Shared Reality: Are we using the same facts?

- Variety: Are we exposed to different opinions grounded in shared reality?

- Receptivity: Are we open, civil, and listening to different opinions?

Twitter strongly agrees that there must be a commitment to a rigorous and independently vetted set of metrics to measure the health of public conversation on Twitter. And in order to develop those health metrics for Twitter, we issued a request for proposal to outside experts for their submissions on proposed health metrics, and methods for capturing, measuring, evaluating and reporting on such metrics. Our expectation is that successful projects will produce peer-reviewed, publicly available, open-access research articles and open source software whenever possible.

As a result of our request for proposal, we are partnering with experts at the University of Oxford and Leiden University and other academic institutions to better measure the health of Twitter, focusing on informational echo chambers and unhealthy discourse on Twitter. This collaboration will also enable us to study how exposure to a variety of perspectives and opinions serves to reduce overall prejudice and discrimination. While looking at political discussions, these projects do not focus on any particular ideological group and the outcomes will be published in full in due course for further discussion.

II. ALGORITHMS SHAPING THE TWITTER EXPERIENCE

We want Twitter to provide a useful, relevant experience to all people using our service. With hundreds of millions of Tweets per day on Twitter, we ha have invested heavily in building systems that organize content on Twitter to show individuals using the platform the most the relevant information for that individual first. We want to do the work for our customers to make it a positive and informative experience. With 335 million people using Twitter every month in dozens of languages and countless cultural contexts, we rely upon machine learning algorithms to help us organize content by relevance.

To preserve the integrity of our platform and to safeguard our democracy, Twitter has also employed technology to be more aggressive in detecting and minimizing the visibility of certain types of abusive and manipulative behaviors on our platform. The algorithms we use to do this work are tuned to prevent the circulation of Tweets that violate our Terms of Service, including the malicious behavior we saw in the 2016 election, whether by nation states seeking to manipulate the election or by other groups who seek to artificially amplify their Tweets.

A.   Timeline Ranking and Filtering

For nearly a decade, the Twitter home timeline displayed Tweets from accounts an individual follows in reverse chronological order. As the volume of content on Twitter continually increased, individuals using the platform told us they were not always seeing useful or relevant information, or were missing important Tweets, and that their home timeline sometimes felt noisy. Based on this feedback, in 2016 we introduced a new ranking feature to the home timeline. This feature creates a better experience for people using Twitter by showing people the Tweets they might find most interesting first. Individuals on Twitter can disable this feature in their settings and return to a reverse chronological timeline at any time. When the feature is disabled, our content suggestions are relatively minimal.

Depending on the number of accounts an individual follows, not all content from all followed accounts may appear in the home timeline. Many people using Twitter follow hundreds or even thousands of Twitter accounts. While Twitter strives to create a positive experience with the ranked timeline, people opening Twitter may still feel as if they have missed important Tweets. If that happens, people can always opt to return to a reverse chronological timeline or view content from people they follow by visiting their profiles directly. We also continue to invest in improving our machine learning systems to predict which Tweets are the most relevant for people on our platform.

In addition to the home timeline, Twitter has a notification timeline that enables people to see who has liked, Retweeted and replied to their Tweets, as well as who mentioned or followed them. We give individuals on Twitter additional controls over the content that appears in the notifications timeline, since notifications may contain content an individual on Twitter has not chosen to receive, such as mentions or replies from someone the individual does not follow. By default, we filter notifications for quality, and exclude notifications about duplicate or potentially spammy Tweets. We also give individuals on the platform granular controls over specific types of accounts they might not want to receive notifications from, including new accounts, accounts the individual does not follow, and accounts without a confirmed phone or email address.

B.   Conversations

Conversations are happening all the time on Twitter. The replies to any given Tweet are referred to as a "conversation." Twitter strives to show content to people that we think they will be most interested in and that contributes meaningfully to the conversation. For this reason, the replies, grouped by sub-conversations, may not be in chronological order. For example, when ranking a reply higher, we consider factors such as if the original Tweet author has replied, or if a reply is from someone the individual follows.

C.   Safe Search

Twitter's search tools allow individuals on Twitter to search every public Tweet on Twitter, going back to my very first Tweet in 2006. There are many ways to use search on Twitter. An individual can find Tweets from friends, local businesses, and everyone from well-known entertainers to global political leaders. By searching for topic keywords or hashtags, an individual can follow ongoing conversations about breaking news or personal interests. To help people understand and organize search results and find the most relevant information quickly, we offer several different versions of search.

By default, searches on Twitter return results in "Top mode." Top Tweets are the most relevant Tweets for a search. We determine relevance based on the popularity of a Tweet (*e.g.*, when a lot of people are interacting with or sharing via Retweets and replies), the keywords it contains, and many other factors. In addition, "Latest mode" returns real-time, reverse-chronological results for a search query.

We give people control over what they see in search results through a "Safe Search" option. This option excludes potentially sensitive content from search results, such as spam, adult content, and the accounts an individual has muted or blocked. Individual accounts may mark their own posts as sensitive as well. Twitter's safe search mode excludes potentially sensitive content, along with accounts an individual may have muted or blocked, from search results in both Top and Latest. Safe Search is enabled by default, and people have the option to turn safe search off, or back on, at any time.

D.   Behavioral Signals and Safeguards

Twitter also uses a range of behavioral signals to determine how Tweets are organized and presented in the home timeline, conversations, and search based on relevance. Twitter relies on behavioral signals—such as how accounts behave and react to one another—to identify content that detracts from a healthy public conversation, such as spam and abuse. Unless we have determined that a Tweet violates Twitter policies, it will remain on the platform, and is available in our product. Where we have identified a Tweet as potentially detracting from healthy conversation (*e.g.*, as potentially abusive), it will only be available to view if you click on "Show more replies" or choose to see everything in your search setting.

Some examples of behavioral signals we use, in combination with each other and a range of other signals, to help identify this of content include: an account with no confirmed email address, simultaneous registration for multiple accounts, accounts that repeatedly Tweet and mention accounts that do not follow them, or behavior that might indicate a coordinated attack. Twitter is also examining how accounts are connected to those that violate our rules and how they interact with each other. The accuracy of the algorithms developed from these behavioral signals will continue to improve over time.

These behavioral signals are an important factor in how Twitter organizes and presents content in communal areas like conversation and search. Our primary goal is to ensure that relevant content and Tweets contributing to healthy conversation will appear first in conversations and search. Because our service operates in dozens of languages and hundreds of cultural contexts around the globe, we have found that behavior is a strong signal that helps us identify bad faith actors on our platform. The behavioral ranking that Twitter utilizes does not consider in any way political views or ideology. It focuses solely on the behavior of all accounts. Twitter is always working to improve our behavior-based ranking models such that their breadth and accuracy will improve over time. We use thousands of behavioral signals in our behavior-based ranking models—this ensures that no one signal drives the ranking outcomes and protects against malicious attempts to manipulate our ranking systems.

Through early testing in markets around the world, Twitter has already seen a recent update to this approach have a positive impact, resulting in a 4 percent drop in abuse reports from search and 8 percent fewer abuse reports from conversations. That metric provided us with strong evidence that fewer people are seeing Tweets that disrupt their experience on Twitter.

Despite the success we are seeing with our use of algorithms to combat abuse, manipulation, and bad faith actors, we recognize that even a model created without deliberate bias may nevertheless result in biased outcomes. Bias can happen inadvertently due to many factors, such as the quality of the data used to train our models. In addition to ensuring that we are not deliberately biasing the algorithms, it is our responsibility to understand, measure, and reduce these accidental biases. This is an extremely complex challenge in our industry, and algorithmic fairness and fair machine learning are active and substantial research topics in the machine learning community. The machine learning teams at Twitter are learning about these techniques and developing a roadmap to ensure our present and future machine learning models uphold a high standard when it comes to algorithmic fairness. We believe this is an important step in ensuring fairness in how we operate and we also know that it's critical that we be more transparent about our efforts in this space.

E.   Additional Context to High-Profile Incidents

Conservative voices have a strong presence on Twitter. For example, in 2017, there were 59.5 million Tweets about Make America Great Again or MAGA. According to the Pew Research Center, people on Twitter used #MAGA an average of 205,238 times per day from Election Day 2016 through May 1, 2018. It was the third most Tweeted hashtag in 2017. Another top hashtag on Twitter is #tcot, or Top Conservatives on Twitter, with 8.4 million Tweets in 2017. During the annual Conservation Political Action Committee (CPAC) conference in February 2018, #CPAC and #CPAC2018 were tweeted 1.2 million times in a four day period. And Twitter's political sales team works with hundreds of active conservative advertisers.

Twitter enabled the White House and media broadcasters to have a dynamic experience on Twitter, publishing and promoting live video event pages to millions of people on Twitter during President Trump's State of the Union address in 2017. In total, more than 39 media broadcasters including ABC, Bloomberg, CBS, FoxNews, PBS NewsHour, Reuters, Univision,

and USA Today participated. Additionally, the White House and Senate GOP both published the entire live video on Twitter reaching over 3.4 million viewers.

In July 2018, we acknowledged that some accounts (including those of Republicans and Democrats) were not being auto-suggested even when people were searching for their specific name. Our usage of the behavioral signals within search was causing this to happen. To be clear, this only impacted our search auto-suggestions. The accounts, their Tweets, and surrounding conversation about those accounts were still showing up in search results. Once identified, this issue was promptly resolved within 24 hours. This impacted 600,000 accounts across the globe and across the political spectrum. And most accounts affected had nothing to do with politics at all. In addition to fixing the search auto-suggestion function, Twitter is continuing to improve our systems so they can better detect these issues and correct for them.

An analysis of accounts for Members of Congress that were affected by this search issue demonstrate there was no negative effect on the growth of their follower counts. To the contrary, follower counts of those Members of Congress spiked. Twitter can make the results of this internal analysis available to the Committee upon request.

Twitter recently made a change to how one of our behavior based algorithms works in search results. When people used search, our algorithms were filtering out those that had a higher likelihood of being abusive from the "Lastest" tab by default. Those search results were visible in "Latest" if someone turned off the quality filter in search, and they were also in Top search and elsewhere throughout the product. Twitter decided that a higher level of precision is needed when filtering to ensure these accounts are included in "Latest" by default. Twitter therefore turned off the algorithm. As always, we will continue to refine our approach and will be transparent about why we make the decisions that we do.

Some critics have raised concerns regarding the impact that mass block lists can have on our algorithms. Our behavioral signals take into account only blocks and mutes that are the result of direct interactions among people on Twitter. That means that, while blocks that result from interactions with others on Twitter are factored into the discoverability of content, blocks that derive from mass block lists have minimal effect on the platform beyond those who have blocked particular other individuals on the platform.

In preparation for this hearing and to better inform the members of the Committee, our data scientists analyzed Tweets sent by all members of the House and Senate that have Twitter accounts for a 30 day period spanning July 23, 2018 until August 13, 2018. We learned that, during that period, Democratic members sent 10,272 Tweets and Republican members sent 7,981. Democrats on average have more followers per account and have more active followers. As a result, Democratic members in the aggregate receive more impressions or views than Republicans.

Despite this greater number of impressions, after controlling for various factors such as the number of Tweets and the number of followers, and normalizing the followers' activity, we observed that there is no statistically significant difference between the number of times a Tweet

by a Democrat is viewed versus a Tweet by a Republican. In the aggregate, controlling for the same number of followers, a single Tweet by a Republican will be viewed as many times as a single Tweet by a Democrat, even after all filtering and algorithms have been applied by Twitter. Our quality filtering and ranking algorithm does not result in Tweets by Democrats or Tweets by Republicans being viewed any differently. Their performance is the same because the Twitter platform itself does not take sides.

III. TWITTER'S WORK ON RUSSIAN INTERFERENCE IN THE 2016 ELECTION

Twitter continues to engage in intensive efforts to identify and combat state-sponsored hostile attempts to abuse social media for manipulative and divisive purposes. We now possess a deeper understanding of both the scope and tactics used by malicious actors to manipulate our platform and sow division across Twitter more broadly. Our efforts enable Twitter to fight this threat while maintaining the integrity of peoples' experience on the service and supporting the health of conversations on our platform. Our work on this issue is not done, nor will it ever be. The threat we face requires extensive partnership and collaboration with our government partners and industry peers. We each possess information the other does not have, and the combined information is more powerful in combating these threats.

A. Retrospective Review

Last fall, we conducted a comprehensive retrospective review of platform activity related to the 2016 election. To better understand the nature of the threat and ways to address future attempts at manipulation, we examined activity on the platform during a 10-week period preceding and immediately following the 2016 election (September 1, 2016 to November 15, 2016). We focused on identifying accounts that were automated, linked to Russia, and Tweeting election-related content, and we compared activity by those accounts to the overall activity on the platform. We reported the results of that analysis in November 2017, and we updated the Committee in January 2018 about the findings from our ongoing review. Additional information on the accounts associated with the Internet Research Agency is included below.

We identified 50,258 automated accounts that were Russian-linked and Tweeting election-related content, representing less than two one-hundredths of a percent (0.016%) of the total accounts on Twitter at the time. Of all election-related Tweets that occurred on Twitter during that period, these malicious accounts constituted approximately one percent (1.00%), totaling 2.12 million Tweets. Additionally, in the aggregate, automated, Russian-linked, election-related Tweets from these malicious accounts generated significantly fewer impressions (i.e., views by others on Twitter) relative to their volume on the platform.

Twitter is committed to ensuring that promoted accounts and paid advertisements are free from hostile foreign influence. In connection with the work we did in the fall, we conducted a comprehensive analysis of accounts that promoted election-related Tweets on the platform throughout 2016 in the form of paid ads. We reviewed nearly 6,500 accounts and our findings showed that approximately one-tenth of one-percent—only nine of the total number of accounts —were Tweeting election-related content and linked to Russia. The two most active accounts out

of those nine were affiliated with Russia Today ("RT"), which Twitter subsequently barred from advertising on Twitter. And Twitter is donating the $1.9 million that RT spent globally on advertising to academic research into election and civic engagement.

Although the volume of malicious election-related activity that we could link to Russia was relatively small, we strongly believe that any such activity on Twitter is unacceptable. We remain vigilant about identifying and eliminating abuse on the platform perpetrated by hostile foreign actors, and we will continue to invest in resources and leverage our technological capabilities to do so. Twitter's main focus is promoting healthy public discourse through protection of the democratic process. Tied to this is our commitment to providing tools for journalism to flourish by creating and maintaining a platform that helps to provides people with high-quality, authentic information in a healthy and safe environment.

We also recognize that, as a private company, there are threats that we cannot understand and address alone. We must continue to work together with our elected officials, government partners, industry peers, outside experts, and other stakeholders so that the American people and the global community can understand the full context in which these threats arise.

B.   Combating Malicious Automation

In the last year, Twitter developed and launched more than 30 policy and product changes designed to foster information integrity and protect the people who use our service from abuse and malicious automation. Many of these product changes are designed to combat spam and malicious automation.

Twitter has refined its detection systems. Twitter prioritizes identifying suspicious account activity, such as exceptionally high-volume Tweeting with the same hashtag or mentioning the same @handle without a reply from the account being addressed, and then requiring confirmation that a human is controlling the account. Twitter has also increased its use of challenges intended to catch automated accounts, such as reCAPTCHAs, that require users to identify portions of an image or type in words displayed on screen, and password reset requests that protect potentially compromised accounts. Twitter is also in the process of implementing mandatory email or cell phone verification for all new accounts.

Our efforts have been effective. Due to technology and process improvements, we are now removing 214 percent more accounts year-over-year for violating our our platform manipulation policies. For example, over the course of the last several months, our systems identified and challenged between 8.5 million and 10 million accounts each week suspected of misusing automation or producing spam. Spam can be generally described as unsolicited, repeated actions that negatively impact other people. This includes many forms of automated account interactions and behaviors as well as attempts to mislead or deceive people. This constitutes more than three times the 3.2 million we were catching in September 2017. We thwart 530,000 suspicious logins a day, approximately double the amount of logins that we detected a year ago.

These technological improvements have brought about a corresponding reduction in the number of spam reports from people on Twitter, a result that demonstrates our systems' ability to automatically detect more malicious accounts and potential bad faith actors than they did in the past. We received approximately 25,000 such reports per day in March of this year; that number decreased to 17,000 in August.

Finally, this summer, we made an important step to increase confidence in follower counts by removing locked accounts from follower counts across profiles globally, to ensure these figures are more reliable. Accounts are locked when our systems detect unusual activity and force a password change or other challenge. If the challenge has not been met or the password has not been changed within a month, the account is locked, barring it from sending Tweets, Retweets or liking posts from others. As a result, the number of followers displayed on many profiles went down. We were transparent about these changes which impacted many people who use Twitter across the political spectrum and are a key part of our information quality efforts.

IV.   RECENT ACTIVITY ON THE PLATFORM

Twitter continues to see bad faith actors attempt to manipulate and divide people on Twitter. Two such examples include recent activity related to new malicious activity by the Russian Internet Research Agency and malicious accounts located in Iran.

A.   Malicious Accounts Affiliated with the Russian Internet Research Agency

Twitter has seen recent activity on the platform affiliated with the Russian Internet Research Agency. We continue to identify accounts that we believe may be linked to the Internet Research Agency ("IRA"). As of today, we have suspended a total of 3,843 accounts we believe are linked to the IRA. And we continue to build on our contextual understanding of these accounts to improve our ability to find and suspend this activity as quickly as possible in the future, particularly as groups such as the IRA evolve their practices in response to suspension efforts across the industry.

As an example of Twitter's ongoing efforts, Twitter identified 18 accounts in March 2018 we believe to be linked to the Internet Research Agency uncovered by our ongoing additional reviews. These accounts were created and registered after the 2016 election. These accounts used false identifies purporting to be Americans, and created personas focused on divisive social and political issues. The accounts represented both sides of the political spectrum. We continue to work with our law enforcement partners on this investigation.

B.   Malicious Accounts Located in Iran

In August 2018, we were notified by an industry peer about possible malicious activity on their platform. After receiving information from them, we began an investigation on our platform to build out our understanding of these networks. We immediately notified law enforcement on this matter as soon as we discovered malicious activity.

We initially identified accounts based on indicators such as phone numbers and email addresses; we then identified additional problematic accounts by matching other behavioral signals. Some of these accounts appeared to pretend to be people in the U.S. and discuss U.S. social commentary. In most cases, the accounts that appeared to suggest a U.S. affiliation or target U.S. audiences were created after the 2016 election. These accounts were in violation of our platform manipulation policies, and were engaged in coordinated activity intended to propagate messages artificially across accounts.

These accounts appear to be located in Iran. This is indicated by, for example, accounts related by an Iranian mobile carrier or phone number or Iranian email address on the account. Although Twitter is blocked in Iran, we may see people engage via virtual private network.

We suspended 770 accounts for violating Twitter policies. Fewer than 100 of the 770 suspended accounts claimed to be located in the U.S. and many of these were sharing divisive social commentary. On average, these 100 accounts Tweeted 867 times, were followed by 1,268 accounts, and were less than a year old. One advertiser ran $30 in ads in 2017. Those ads did not target the U.S. and the billing address was located outside of Iran. We will remain engaged with law enforcement and our peer companies on this issue.

Twitter has been in close contact with our industry peers about the malicious accounts located within Iran—we have received detailed information from them that has assisted us in our investigation, and we have shared our own details and work with other companies. We expect this process will continue and that the industry can continue to build on this effort and assist with this ongoing investigation.

* * *

The purpose of Twitter is to serve the public conversation, and we do not make value judgments on personal beliefs. We are focused on making our platform—and the technology it relies upon—better and smarter over time and sharing our work and progress with this Committee and the American people. We think increased transparency is critical to promoting healthy public conversation on Twitter and earning trust.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

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Mr. WALDEN. Thank you, Mr. Dorsey.

We'll now begin the opportunity to have questions and I will lead off.

So, Mr. Dorsey, I am going to get straight to the heart of why we are here today. We have a lot of questions about Twitter's business practices including questions about your algorithms, content management practices, and how Section 230's safe harbors protect Twitter.

In many ways, for some of us, it seems a little bit like the Wizard of Oz—we want to know what's going on behind the curtain.

This summer, reports surfaced that profiles of prominent Republican Twitter users were not appearing in automatically populated drop-down search results. I think you mentioned that in your own testimony. This was after a member of this committee had her tweets and ads taken off the service because of a basic conservative message, and then there are other examples that have been sent our way.

Twitter's public response is, "We do not shadow ban." You're always able to see the tweets from accounts you follow, although you may have to "do more work to find them like go directly to their profile."

But to most people, they might think of that as shadow banning. It doesn't matter what your definition of shadow banning is when the expectation you are giving to your users who choose to follow certain accounts is different from what they see on their timeline and in their searches.

In one example of many, certain prominent conservative users including some of our colleagues who have come to us—Representatives Meadows, Jordan, Gaetz—were not shown in the automatically populated drop-down searches on Twitter, correct?

Out of the more than 300 million active Twitter users, why did this only happen to certain accounts? In other words, what did the algorithm take into account that led to prominent conservatives, including members of the U.S. House of Representatives, not being included in auto search suggestions? What caused that?

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you for the question.

So we use signals, usually hundreds of signals, to determine and to decide what to show, what to down rank, or, potentially, what to filter.

In this particular case, as I mentioned in my opening, we were using a signal of the behavior of the people following accounts and we didn't believe, upon further consideration and also seeing the impact, which was about 600,000 accounts—a pretty broad base— that that was ultimately fair and we decided to correct it.

We also decided that it was not fair to use a signal for filtering in general and we decided to correct that within search as well. And it is important for us to, one, be able to experiment freely with the signals and to have the freedom to be able to inject them and also to remove them because that's the only way we are going to learn.

We will make mistakes along the way and the way we want to be judged is making sure that we recognize those and that we correct them, and what we are looking for in terms of whether we made a mistake or not is this principle of impartiality and, specifi-

cally, impartial outcomes, and we realized that in this particular case and within search that we weren't driving that and we could have done a better job there.

Mr. WALDEN. Let me ask you another question. Could bots game the system or work to block or silence certain voices, political or otherwise?

Mr. DORSEY. We are always looking for patterns of behavior intending to amplify information artificially and that information could include actions like blocking.

So that's why it's important that we don't just use one signal but we use hundreds of signals and that we balance them accordingly.

There is a perception that a simple report of a violation of the terms of service will result in action or down ranking. That is not true. It is one signal that we use and weigh according to other signals that we see across.

Mr. WALDEN. I have one final question. I asked Twitter followers I have and one from Oregon asked why Twitter relies exclusively on users to report violations.

Mr. DORSEY. This is a matter of scale. So today, in order to remove tweets or to remove accounts, we do require a report of the violating and that report is reviewed by an individual.

Those reports are prioritized based on the severity of the report. So death threats have a higher prioritization of all others and we take action on them much faster.

We do have algorithms that are constantly proactively searching the network and, specifically, the behaviors on the network and filtering and down ranking accordingly. And what that means in terms of filtering is it might filter behind an interstitial. An interstitial is a graphic or element within our app or service that one can tap to see more tweets or show more replies.

So in some cases, we are proactively, based on these algorithms, hiding some of the content, causing a little bit more friction to actually see it and, again, those are models that we constantly learn from and evolve as well.

Mr. WALDEN. My time has expired.

I now recognize the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Pallone.

Mr. PALLONE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Twitter's effect on American society raise genuine and serious issues. But that's not why the Republican majority has called you here today, Mr. Dorsey.

I think it's the height of hypocrisy that President Trump and congressional Republicans criticize Twitter for supposed liberal bias when President Trump uses the platform every day for his juvenile tweets and spreading lies and misinformation to the whole country and to the world.

In my opinion, you have an obligation to ensure your platform, at a minimum, does no harm to our country or democracy and the American public. And as I noted in my opening, one persistent critique of Twitter by civil rights advocates and victims of abuse and others is that your policies are unevenly enforced.

The rich and powerful get special treatment. Others get little recourse when Twitter fails to protect them unless the company gets some bad press.

Now, you have admitted that Twitter needs to do a better job explaining how decisions are made, especially those by human content moderators who handle the most difficult and sensitive questions.

So let me just ask you, how many human content moderators does Twitter employ in the U.S. and how much do they get paid?

Mr. DORSEY. So we want to think about this problem not in terms of the number of people but how we make decisions to invest in building new technologies versus hiring folks.

Mr. PALLONE. Well, let me ask you these three questions on this point and then if you can't answer it I would appreciate it if through the chairman you could get back to us.

The first one was how many human content moderators does Twitter employ in the U.S. and how much do they get paid, second, how many hours of training is given to them to ensure consistency in their decisions, and last, are they given specific instructions to ensure that celebrities and politicians are treated the same as everyone else.

Otherwise, I am going to ask you to get back to us in writing because I——

Mr. DORSEY. We'll follow up with you on specific numbers. But on the last point, this is a very important distinction. I do believe that we need to do more around protecting private individuals than public figures.

I don't know yet exactly how that will manifest. But I do believe it's important that we extend the protection of our rules more to private individuals necessarily than public figures.

Mr. PALLONE. Well, I appreciate that, because I think everyone should be treated the same and you seem to be saying that. But we have to make sure that the enforcement mechanism is there so that's true.

Let me ask, if you could report back to the committee within one month of what steps Twitter is taking to improve the consistency of its enforcement and the metrics that demonstrate improvement, if you could, within a month. Is that OK?

Mr. DORSEY. Absolutely.

Mr. PALLONE. All right.

Now, let me turn to another issue. I only have a minute. Other technology companies like Airbnb and Facebook have committed to conducting civil rights audits amid concerns raised by members of the Congressional Black Caucus and others including Representatives Rush to my left, Butterfield, and Clarke on our committee, and these audits seek to uncover how platforms and their policies have been used to stoke racial and religious resentment or violence, and given the sometimes dangerous use of your platform and the haphazard approach of Twitter towards developing and enforcing its policies, I think your company should take similar action.

So let me ask these three questions and, again, if you can answer them. If not, please get back to us within the month.

Will you commit to working with an independent third-party institution to conduct a civil rights audit of Twitter? Yes or no.

Mr. DORSEY. We will, and we do do that on a regular basis with what's called our Trust and Safety Council, which——

Mr. PALLONE. All right. But asking for an independent third party institution to conduct it.

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. Let us follow up with you on that.

Mr. PALLONE. All right.

Second, let me ask these two together—will you commit to making the results of all such audits available to the public, including all recommendations and findings?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. We do believe we need a lot more transparency around our actions and our decisions——

Mr. PALLONE. All right.

Then the third one, Mr. Chairman, with your permission, will you commit, based on the findings of all such audits to change Twitter's policies, programs and processes to address these areas of concern? Yes or no.

Mr. DORSEY. We are always looking to evolve our policies based on what we find, so yes.

Mr. PALLONE. All right.

And again, Mr. Chairman, through you, if we could get a report back to the committee within one month of the steps that Mr. Dorsey is taking, I would appreciate it.

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you.

Mr. WALDEN. All right. Thank you.

I now turn to Mr. Upton, former chairman of the committee, for questions.

Mr. UPTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

So, Mr. Dorsey, I think it's fair to say that even looking at my Twitter feed that there are some fairly ugly things on Twitter that come every now and then, and my name is Fred Upton and I got a bet that my initials are probably used more than just about any other.

[Laughter.]

Might even think that it's bipartisan on both sides of the aisle. But I would like to see civility brought back into the public discourse. In a July post, Twitter acknowledged that tweets from bad faith actors who intend to manipulate or divide the conversations should be ranked lower.

So the question is how do you determine whether a user is tweeting to manipulate or divide the conversation?

Mr. DORSEY. This is a great question and one that we have struggled with in the past. We recently determined that we needed something much more tangible and cohesive in order to think about this work and we've come across health as a concept.

And we've all had experiences where we felt we've been in a conversation that's a little bit more toxic and we wanted to walk away from it. We've all been in conversations that felt really empowering and something that we are learning from and we want to stay in them.

So right now, we are trying to determine what the indicators of conversational health are and we are starting with four indicators. One is what is the amount of shared attention that a conversation has? What percentage of the conversation is focused on the same things? What is a percentage of shared facts that the conversation is having—not whether the facts are true or false, but are we sharing the same facts. What percentage of the conversation is recep-

tive? And finally, is there a variety of perspective within the conversation or is it a filter bubble or echo chamber of the same sort of ideas.

So we are currently trying to figure out what those indicators of health are and to measure them and we intend not only to share what those indicators are that we've found but also to measure ourselves against it and make that public so we can show progress, because we don't believe we can really fix anything unless we can—we can measure it and we are working with external parties to help us do that because we know we can't do this alone.

Mr. UPTON. So do you believe that Twitter's rules are clear on what's allowed and what's not allowed on the platform?

Mr. DORSEY. I believe if you were to go to our rules today and sit down with a cup of coffee, you would not be able to understand it. I believe we need to do a much better job not only with those rules but with our terms of service. We need to make them a whole lot more approachable.

We would love to lead in this area and we are working on this. But I think there's a lot of confusion around our rules and also our enforcement and we intend to fix it.

Mr. UPTON. The last question is can a Twitter user's friend or someone that they follow grant permission to access to that user's personal information to a third party?

Mr. DORSEY. No. If you are sharing your password of your account with another, then they have the rights that you would have to take on with that account.

Mr. UPTON. Yield back.

Mr. WALDEN. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from New York, Mr. Tonko.

Ms. DeGette is next. OK. The chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Colorado, Ms. DeGette. We are going by the order we were given.

Ms. DEGETTE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Dorsey, thank you so much for joining us here today because these are important issues, and even though the Democrats have highlighted that, really, some of the reasons why you came are—we think are political and wrong, nonetheless, there are some real issues with Twitter that I think we can discuss today.

And as you said, Twitter really has become a tool for engagement across society and, recently, we saw some of its positive social change with the role it's played in the #Metoo movement.

But nonetheless, Twitter has also experienced its own sexual harassment problem to confront and I just wanted to ask you some questions about how Twitter is dealing with these issues.

I don't know if you're aware, Mr. Dorsey, of the Amnesty International report called "Toxic Twitter: A Toxic Place for Women *." Are you aware of that?

Mr. DORSEY. I am aware of it.

Ms. DEGETTE. Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask unanimous consent to put that in the record.

Mr. WALDEN. Without objection.

Ms. DeGette. Now, in that report, it described the issues women face on Twitter and how Twitter could change to be more friendly to women. I assume you have talked to Amnesty International about this report and about some of their recommendations?

Mr. Dorsey. I haven't personally but I imagine that the folks on our team have. But we can follow up with you.

Ms. DeGette. Thank you.

The report goes into great and, frankly, graphic detail of the types of abuses that have been experienced on Twitter including threats of rape, bodily harm, and death.

Now, some have been found to violate Twitter's guidelines but others were not, and I think probably you and your staff agree that Twitter needs to do a better job of addressing instances where some of the users are using the platform to harass and threaten others.

And so I am wondering if you can tell me does Twitter currently have data on reports of abuse of conduct including on the basis of race, religion, gender, or orientation, targeted harassment, or threats of violence? And separately, does Twitter have data on the actions that it has taken to address these complaints?

Mr. Dorsey. So a few things here. First and foremost, we don't believe that we can create a digital public square for people if they don't feel safe to participate in the first place, and that is our number one and singular objective as a company is to increase the health of this public space.

We do have data on all violations that we have seen across the platform and the context of those violations, and we do intend—and this will be an initiative this year—to create a transparency report that will make that data more public so that all can learn from it and we can also be held publicly accountable to it.

Ms. DeGette. That's good news, and you say you will have that this year yet, by the end of——

Mr. Dorsey. We are working on it as an initiative this year. We have a lot of work to do to aggregate all the data and to report that will be meaningful——

Ms. DeGette. And is Twitter also taking actions to address some of the deficiencies that have been identified in this report and in other places?

Mr. Dorsey. We are. One other point I wanted to make is that we don't feel it's fair that the victims of abuse and harassment have to do the work to report it.

Ms. DeGette. Yes.

Mr. Dorsey. Today, our system does work on reports, especially when it has to take content down. So abuse reports is a metric that we would look at, not as something that we want to go up because it's easier to report things but as something we want to go down not only because we think that we can—we can reduce the amount of abuse but we can actually create technology to recognize it before people have to do the reporting themselves.

Ms. DeGette. Recognize it and take it down before a report has to be made?

Mr. Dorsey. Yes. Any series of enforcement actions all the way to the extreme of it, which is removing content.

Ms. DeGette. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I just want to say for the record I don't think these issues are unique to Twitter. Unlike so many of the invented borderline conspiracy theories, I believe this is a real threat and I appreciate you, Mr. Dorsey, taking this seriously and your entire organization so that we can really reduce these threats online.

Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentlelady yields back.

The chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Shimkus, for questions.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Dorsey, first of all, go Cards. I am from the St. Louis metropolitan area and be careful of Colin behind you, who has been known to be in this committee room a couple times. So we are glad to have him back.

And I want to go to my questions and then hopefully have time for a little summation. While listening to users is important, how can anyone be sure that standards about what "distracts" or "distorts" are being handled fairly and consistently? And the follow-up is doesn't this give power to the loudest mob and, ultimately, fail to protect controversial speech?

Mr. DORSEY. So this goes back to that framework I was discussing around health and, again, I don't know if those are the right indicators yet. That's why we are looking for outside help to make sure that we are doing the right work.

But we should have an understanding and a tangible measurement of our effects on our system and, specifically, in these cases we are looking for behaviors that try to artificially amplify information and game our systems in some ways that might happen——

Mr. SHIMKUS. I am sorry to interrupt—but a bot would be—you would consider that as manipulating the system, right?

Mr. DORSEY. If a bot is used for manipulating the conversation and the way we——

Mr. SHIMKUS. What about if the users band together? Would that be what you would consider manipulation?

Mr. DORSEY. And that's why it makes this issue complicated is because sometimes we see bots. Sometimes we see human coordinations in order to manipulate.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Thank you. Twitter has a verification program where users can be verified by Twitter as legitimate and verified users have a blue checkmark next to their name on their page. How does the review process for designating verified users align with your community guidelines or standards?

Mr. DORSEY. Well, to be very frank, our verification program right now is not where we'd like it to be and we do believe it is in serious need of a reboot and a reworking.

And it has a long history. It started as a way to verify that the CDC account was the actual CDC account during the swine flu and we brought into—without as many strong principles—as we needed and then we opened the door to everyone, and, unfortunately, that has caused some issues because the verified badge also is a signal that is used in some of our algorithms to rank higher or to inject within shared areas of the——

Mr. SHIMKUS. That was my next question. You do prioritize content shared by verified users currently?

Mr. DORSEY. We do have signals that do that. We are identifying those and asking ourselves whether that is still true and it's still correct today.

Mr. SHIMKUS. And then I am just going to end with my final minute to talk about industry standards. I think my colleague, Diana DeGette, hit on the issue because this is across the technological space.

You're not the only one that's trying to address these type of concerns. Many industries have banded together to have industry standards by which they can comply and also can help self-police and self-correct.

I would encourage the tech sector to start looking at that model and there's a lot of them out there. I was fortunate to get this book, "The Future Computed," in one of my visits to Tech World, and, they just mention fairness, reliability, privacy, inclusion, transparency, and accountability as kind of baseloads of standards that should go across the platform, and we need to get there for the use of the platforms and the trust.

And with that, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yield back.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentleman yields back.

The chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Green, for questions.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Dorsey, thank you for being here today and I am pleased that Twitter started taking steps to improve users' experience on its platform.

However, Twitter's current policies still leave the consumers in danger of the spread of misinformation and harassment.

Twitter needs to strengthen its policies to ensure that users are protected from fake accounts, misinformation, and harassment, and I know that's an issue you all are trying to address.

I would like to start off by addressing privacy. Twitter has changed its policy in regards to the general data protection regulation that went into effect by the European Union this summer.

The GDPR makes it clear that consumers need to be in control of their own data and understands how their data is being given to others.

Mr. Dorsey, as it now stands, the United States does not mandate these settings are enforced. However, I think they are important for an integral part of consumers.

My question is will Twitter commit to allowing users in the United States have the option of opting out of tracking, despite the fact that there's no current regulation mandating this for protection for consumers?

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you for the question.

Even before GDPR was enacted and we complied with that regulation, a year prior we were actively making sure that the people that we serve have the controls necessary to opt out of tracking across the web, to understand all the data that we have inferred on their usage, and to individually turn that off and on.

So we took some major steps pre-GDPR and made sure that we complied with GDPR as well. We are very different from our peers in that the majority of what is on Twitter is public.

People are approaching Twitter with a mindset of when I tweet this the whole world can see it. So we have a different approach and different needs.

But we do believe that privacy is a fundamental human right and we will work to protect it and continue to look for ways to give people more control and more transparency around what we have on them.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you.

One of the steps Twitter has taken to protect consumers has been to come together with other social media platforms to create the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism.

However, there is no forum to counter fake bot accounts on social media platforms. What steps is Twitter taking to work together with social media platforms to combat these fake bots accounts like the 770 accounts Twitter and other social media platforms recently deleted that were linked to Russian and Iranian disinformation campaigns?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. So this one is definitely a complicated issue that we are addressing head on. There's a few things we would love to just generally be able to identify bots across the platform and we can do that by recognizing when people come in through our API.

There are other vectors of attack where people script our website or our app to make it look as if they were humans and they're not coming through our API.

So it's not a simple answer. But having said that, we have gotten a lot better in terms of identifying and also challenging accounts.

We identify 8 to 10 million accounts every single week and challenge them to determine if they're human or not and we've also thwarted over half a million accounts every single day from even logging in to Twitter because of what we detected to be suspicious activity.

So there's a lot more that we need to do but I think we do have a good start. We always want to side with more automated technology that recognize behavior and patterns instead of going down to the surface area of names or profile images or what not.

So we are looking for behaviors and the intention of the action, which is oftentimes to artificially amplify information and manipulate others.

Mr. GREEN. OK.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know I am out of my time, and thank you for being here today.

Mr. WALDEN. Mr. Green.

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you so much.

Mr. WALDEN. The chair will now recognize the gentleman from Texas, the chairman of our Health Subcommittee, Dr. Burgess, for 4 minutes for questions.

Mr. BURGESS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Dorsey, for being here. I will just say that Twitter is—in addition to everything else, it's a news source.

It's how I learned of the death of Osama bin Laden many, many years ago when Seal Team 6 provided that information and it happened in real time, late, a Sunday night. The news shows were all over, and Twitter provided the information.

This morning, sitting in conference, not able to get to a television, one of my local television stations was attacked and Twitter provided the real-time information and updates. So it's extremely useful and for that as a tool I thank you.

Sometimes, though—well, Meghan McCain's husband complained a lot on Twitter over the weekend because of a doctored image of Meghan McCain that was put up on Twitter and then it seemed like it took forever for that to come down.

Is there not some way that people can—I understand there are algorithms. I understand that you have to have checks and balances. But, really, it shouldn't take hours for something that's that egregious to be addressed.

Mr. DORSEY. Absolutely, and that was unacceptable and we don't want to use our scale as an excuse here. We need to do two things.

Number one, we can't place the burden on the victims and that means we need to build technology so that we are not waiting for reports—that we are actively looking for instances.

While we do have reports and while we are making those changes and building that technology, we need to do a better job at prioritizing, especially any sort of violent or threatening information.

In this particular case, this was an image and we just didn't apply the image filter to recognize what was going on in real time. So we did take way too many hours to act and we are using that as a lesson in order to help improve our systems.

Mr. BURGESS. And I am sure you have. But just for the record, have you apologized to the McCain family?

Mr. DORSEY. I haven't personally but I will.

Mr. BURGESS. I think you just did.

But along the same lines, but maybe a little bit different—the chairman referenced several members of Congress who had been affected by what was described as shadow banning.

So does someone have to report? Is it only fixed if someone complains about it? And if no one complained, would it have been fixed? So with Mr. Jordan, Mr. Meadows, Mr. Gaetz, and their accounts being diminished, is it only because they complained that that got fixed?

Mr. DORSEY. It's a completely fair point and we are regularly looking at the outcomes of our algorithms. It wasn't just the voices of members of Congress.

We saw, as we rolled this system out, a general conversation about it and sometimes we need to roll these out and see what happens because we are not going to be able to test every single outcome in the right way.

So we did get a lot of feedback and a lot of conversations about it and that is what prompted more digging and an understanding of what we were actually doing and whether it was the right approach.

Mr. BURGESS. And as a committee, can we expect any sort of follow-up as to your own investigations digging that you described? Is

that something that you can share with us as you get more information?

Mr. DORSEY. We would love to. We want to put a premium on transparency and also how we can give you information that is, clearly, accountable to changes.

That is why we are putting the majority of our focus on this particular topic into our transparency report that we would love to release. It's going to require a bunch of work——

Mr. BURGESS. Sure.

Mr. DORSEY [continuing]. And some time to do that. But we would love to share it.

Mr. BURGESS. And we appreciate your attention to that.

Mr. Chairman, I will yield back. Thank you.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentleman yields back.

The chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Doyle, for 4 minutes.

Mr. DOYLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Dorsey, welcome. Thanks for being here. I want to read a few quotes about Twitter's practices and I just want you to tell me if they're true or not.

"Social media is being rigged to censor conservatives." Is that true of Twitter?

Mr. DORSEY. No.

Mr. DOYLE. "I don't know what Twitter is up to. It sure looks like to me that they're censoring people and they ought to stop it." Are you censoring people?

Mr. DORSEY. No.

Mr. DOYLE. "Twitter is shadow banning prominent Republicans. That's bad." Is that true?

Mr. DORSEY. No.

Mr. DOYLE. So these were statements made by Kevin McCarthy, the House majority leader, on Twitter, Devin Nunes on Fox News, and President Trump on Twitter, and I want to place those statements into the record, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. WALDEN. Without objection.

[The information appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. DOYLE. I think it's important for people to understand the premise of this whole hearing and the reason that Twitter somehow, with all the other social media platforms out there, got the singular honor to sit in front of this committee is because there is some implication that your site is trying to censor conservative voices on your platform.

Now, when you tried to explain the shadow banning, as I understand it you had a system where if people who were following people had some behaviors, that was the trigger that caused you to do the shadow banning.

So you were really like an equal opportunity shadow banner, right? You didn't just shadow ban four conservative Republicans.

You shadow banned 600,000 people across your entire platform across the globe who had people following them that had certain behaviors that caused you to downgrade them coming up. Is that correct?

Mr. DORSEY. Correct.

Mr. DOYLE. So this was never targeted at conservative Republicans. This was targeted to a group of 600,000 people because of the people who followed them, and then you determined that wasn't fair and you corrected that practice. Is that correct?

Mr. DORSEY. Correct.

Mr. DOYLE. So just for the record, since you have been singled out as a social media platform before this committee, Twitter undertook no behavior to selectively censor conservative Republicans or conservative voices on your platform. Is that correct?

Mr. DORSEY. Correct.

Mr. DOYLE. Good. So let the record reflect that because that's the whole reason supposedly we are here, because House Leader Kevin McCarthy wrote our chairman a letter and said, hey, this is going on and we think your committee should investigate it, and it's a load of crap.

Now, let me ask you a couple other things while I still have some time. What are you doing to address the real concerns many of us have about people that use Twitter to bully, troll, or threaten other people.

We know that this has led to many prominent users, particularly women, who have been targeted with sexual threats leaving Twitter because of this toxic environment.

Now, I understand that you're working to address these issues and that you want to to use machine learning and AI. But I am concerned that these solutions will take too long to deploy and that they can't cure the ills that Twitter is currently suffering from.

So my question is how can we be assured that you and your company have the proper incentives to address the toxicity and abusive behavior on your platform, given Twitter's current state?

Mr. DORSEY. First and foremost, we—our singular objective as a company right now is to increase the health of public conversation and we realize that that will come at short-term cost.

We realize that we will be removing accounts. We realize that it doesn't necessarily go into a formula where—I think there's a perception that we are not going to act because we want as much activity as possible. That is——

Mr. DOYLE. Right. There's like an economic disincentive to act because it takes people from your platform.

Mr. DORSEY. That is not true. So we see increasing health of public conversation as a growth vector for us.

Mr. DOYLE. Good.

Mr. DORSEY. It's not a short-term growth vector. It is a long-term growth vector and we are willing to take the hard path and the decisions in order to do so and we communicated a lot of these during our last earnings call and the reaction by Wall Street was not as positive.

But we believe it was important for us to continue to increase the health of this public square. Otherwise, no one's going to use it in the first place.

Mr. DOYLE. Thank you for being here today.

I yield back.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentleman yields back.

The chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas, former chairman of the committee, Mr. Barton, for 4 minutes.

Mr. BARTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank you, sir, for appearing voluntarily without subpoena and standing or sitting there all by yourself. That's refreshing.

I don't know what a Twitter CEO should look like but you don't look like a CEO of Twitter should look like with that beard.

Mr. DORSEY. My mom would agree with you.

[Laughter.]

Mr. BARTON. I am going to reverse the questions that my good friend, Mr. Doyle, just asked so that we get both sides of the question.

In a July blog post, your company, Twitter, indicated some Democrat politicians were not properly showing up within search auto suggestions. In other words, your company said that your algorithm were somewhat discriminatory against Democrats.

Can you identify which Democrat representatives and accounts weren't properly showing up?

Mr. DORSEY. We typically don't identify those as a matter of protecting their privacy and they haven't communicated that. But we can certainly follow up with your staff.

Mr. BARTON. All right. Can you identify how many without naming names?

Mr. DORSEY. We'll follow up with your staff on that.

Mr. BARTON. Can you personally vouch that that statement is a true statement——

Mr. DORSEY. Yes.

Mr. BARTON [continuing]. That there are Democrat politicians who, when you did the auto search, they didn't show up?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. It was over 600,000 accounts.

Mr. BARTON. No. No. There were 600,000 accounts affected but how many Democrat versus Republican accounts?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes, I——

Mr. BARTON. The allegation that we made, the Republicans, is that you're discriminatory against us—against the Republicans. Your post says, well, there were some Democrat politicians, too.

So out of 600,000 if there were a thousand Republicans and 10 Democrats, it still seems somewhat biased. If it's 50/50, then that's a whole different ball game.

Mr. DORSEY. Well, we agree that the result was not impartial and that is why we corrected it and we fixed it.

Mr. BARTON. So you do agree that there were more Republicans than Democrats?

Mr. DORSEY. I didn't say that. But I do——

Mr. BARTON. Well, you can't have it both ways, sir.

[Laughter.]

It's either 50/50 or one side is disproportionately affected and the allegation is that more Republicans were affected.

Mr. DORSEY. Well, we don't always have the best methods to determine who is a Republican and who is a Democrat. We have to refer——

Mr. BARTON. Well, usually it's known because we run as Republicans or Democrats. That's not hard to identify.

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. When it is self-identified it's easier. But we are happy to follow up with you.

Mr. BARTON. Well, my chairman keeps whispering in my ear. I am glad to have a staffer who's the chairman of the committee.

Do you discriminate more on philosophy like anti-conservative versus pro-liberal?

Mr. DORSEY. No. Our policies and our algorithms don't take into consideration any affiliation philosophy or viewpoint.

Mr. BARTON. That's hard to stomach. We wouldn't be having this discussion if there wasn't a general agreement that your company has discriminated against conservatives, most of whom happen to be Republican.

Mr. DORSEY. I believe that we have found impartial outcomes and those are what we intend to fix and continue to measure.

Mr. BARTON. All right. Well, my time is about to expire. You said you would provide my staff those answers with some more specificity and I hope you mean that.

But, again, thank you for voluntarily appearing. I yield back.

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you. We'll follow up with you.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentleman yields back.

The chair recognizes the gentlelady from California, Ms. Matsui, for 4 minutes for questions.

Ms. MATSUI. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Dorsey, thank you for being here. I know it's becoming a long day for you.

I want to talk to you about anonymization. It's been noted that advertising is less concerned with identifying the individual per se than with the activity of users to predict and infer consumer behavior.

But I wonder if that is quickly becoming a distinction without a difference. Even when user content isn't associated with that user's name, precise information can and is gathered through metadata associated with messages or tweets.

For instance, Twitter offers geospatial metadata that requires parsing the tweet for location and names of interest including nicknames. The metadata could then be associated with other publicly available social media data to re-identify individuals, and researchers have demonstrated this ability.

So even though advertising itself may not be considered with identifying the individual, how is Twitter working to ensure its data is not being used by others to do so?

Mr. DORSEY. Well, first and foremost, the data on Twitter is very different than our peer companies, given that the majority of our data is public by default, and where we do infer information around people's interests or their behaviors on the network we enable them, first and foremost, to see what we've collected and, second, turn it off.

And in terms of our data business, our data business is actually focused on packaging up and making real time the public data, and we send everyone who wants to consume that real-time stream of the public data through a know-your-customer process, which we audit every year as well to make sure that the intent is still good and proper and also consistent with how they signed up.

Ms. MATSUI. OK. As I previously announced in this committee, I am soon introducing legislation to direct the Department of Com-

merce to convene a working group of stakeholders to develop a con-
sensus-based definition of block chain.

Distributed ledger technologies such as block chain have particu-
larly interesting potential applications in the communications
space ranging from identity verification to IOT deployments and
spectrum sharing.

But there currently is no common definition of block chain, which
could hinder in its deployment. You had previously expressed inter-
est in the broad applications of block chain technology including po-
tentially any effort to verify identity to fight misinformation and
scams.

What potential applications do you see for block chain?

Mr. DORSEY. First and foremost, we need to start with problems
that we are trying to solve and the problems we are solving for our
customers and then look at all available technology in order to un-
derstand if it can help us or accelerate or make those outcomes
much better.

So block chain is one that I think has a lot of untapped potential,
specifically around distributed trust and distributed enforcement,
potentially.

We haven't gone as deep as we'd like just yet in understanding
how we might apply this technology to the problems we are facing
at Twitter but we do have people within the company thinking
about it today.

Ms. MATSUI. OK. Advertising-supported models like Twitter gen-
erate revenue through user-provided data. In your terms of service,
you maintain that what's yours is yours—you own your content.

I appreciate that, but I want to understand more about that. To
me, it means users ought to have some say about if, how, and when
it's used.

But you say that Twitter has an evolving set of rules for how
partners can interact with user content and that Twitter may mod-
ify or adapt this content as it's distributed.

The hearings this committee has held demonstrated that the real
crux of the issue is how content is used and modified to develop
assumptions and inferences about users to better target ads to the
individual.

Do you believe that consumers own their data, even when that
data has modified, used to develop inferences, supplemented by ad-
ditional data, or otherwise?

Mr. DORSEY. Sorry. What was the question? Do I——

Ms. MATSUI. Do you believe that consumers own their data?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes.

Ms. MATSUI. Even when that data has modified, used to develop
inferences, supplemented by additional data, or otherwise?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. Generally, we would want to understand all
the ramifications of that. But yes, we believe that people own their
data and should have ultimate control over it.

Ms. MATSUI. OK. Thank you.

I yield back.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentlelady yields back.

The chair now recognizes the whip of the House, Mr. Scalise, for
4 minutes.

Mr. SCALISE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And Mr. Dorsey, appreciate you coming, and as others have said, we are welcoming your testimony and your willingness to answer some of these questions, and I think there are serious concerns more than anything about how Twitter has been used and will continue to be used and, clearly, there is many examples of things that Twitter has done and you can just look at the Arab Spring.

Many people would suggest that a lot of the real ability for the Arab Spring to take off started with platforms like Twitter, and in 2009 you were banned in Iran and we've seen other countries—China and North Korea have banned Twitter.

And I would imagine when Twitter was banned, it wasn't a good feeling. But what we are concerned about is how Twitter has, in some ways, it looks like selectively adversely affected conservatives.

I want to go through a couple of examples, and I would imagine you're familiar with these but our colleague, Marsha Blackburn, when she announced her campaign for the Senate, Twitter quickly banned her announcement advertisement because it had a pro-life message.

She, at the time, was the chair of the Special Select Committee that a number of my colleagues, both Republican and Democrat, here were on it that were looking into the sale of body parts, and Twitter banned her because they said this statement was deemed an inflammatory statement that is likely to evoke a strong negative reaction.

Are you familiar with this?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes.

Mr. SCALISE. Why was she banned for just stating a fact that Congress was actually investigating because of the deep concern nationally when this scandal took place?

Mr. DORSEY. Well, first, we—this was a mistake and we do apologize——

Mr. SCALISE. This was a mistake by Twitter?

Mr. DORSEY. It was a mistake by Twitter. It was a mistake by us, which we corrected.

Mr. SCALISE. So was anybody held accountable for that mistake?

Mr. DORSEY. What do you mean by that?

Mr. SCALISE. Well, somebody—I mean, there was a spokesperson that said we deem it inflammatory—Twitter deems it inflammatory and at the same time the organization that was selling the body parts was not banned by Twitter but our colleague, who just exposed the fact that the sale of body parts was going on, was banned by Twitter, and one of your own spokespersons said that it was inflammatory.

Was that person held accountable for making those kind of statements?

Mr. DORSEY. We use these events and these opportunities to improve our process and look for ways——

Mr. SCALISE. And we've talked about that and, obviously, I appreciate the fact that you have acknowledged that there have been some mistakes made in algorithms and we've talked about this with other companies.

Facebook was in here talking about similar concerns that we had with their algorithm and how we felt that might have been biased against conservatives.

A liberal website, Vice, did a study of all members of Congress—all 535—and they identified only three that they felt were targeted in the shadow banning and that was Reps. Meadows, Jordan, and Gaetz.

And I know while, I think, Mr. Barton was trying to get into this in more detail, if there were 600,000, ultimately they did a study and found only three members of Congress were biased against and all three happened to be conservatives.

And so can you at least see that that is a concern that a lot of us have if there is a real bias in the algorithm as it was developed.

And look, I've written algorithms before. So if somebody wrote an algorithm with a bias against conservatives, I would hope you are trying to find out who those people are and if they're using their own personal viewpoints to discriminate against certain people.

Because if it's your stated intention that you don't want that discrimination to take place, I would hope that you would want to know if there are people working for Twitter that did have that kind of discriminatory viewpoint against conservatives that you would at least hold them accountable so that it doesn't happen again.

Mr. DORSEY. I would want to know that, and I assure you that the algorithm was not written with that intention. The signal that we were using caught people up in it and it was a signal that we determined was not relevant and also not fair in this particular case.

And there will be times—and this is where we need to experiment, as you know, in writing algorithms in the past—that you need to test things and see if they work at scale and pull them back correctly if they don't and that is—that is our intention.

Mr. SCALISE. But also you shouldn't inject your own personal viewpoint into that unless that's the intention of the company. But you're saying it's not the intention of the company.

Mr. DORSEY. That is not the intention and they should never be ejecting people.

Mr. SCALISE. And I know I am out of time. But I appreciate at least your answering these questions. Hopefully, we can get some more answers to these examples and there are others like this that we'd surely like to have addressed.

Thank you. Yield back.

Mr. WALDEN. The chair now recognizes the——

[Disturbance in hearing room.]

Mr. WALDEN. Order. We'll have order in the hearing room or you will be asked to leave. Ma'am, if you will please take a seat or we'll have to have you—then you will need to relieve——

[Disturbance in hearing room.]

Mr. LONG. Huh? What's she saying? I can't understand her. What? What's she——

Mr. WALDEN. Officer, will you escort this young lady out, please?

Somehow I think our auctioneer in residence is going to get tweeted about today. Yes.

I would remind members of the audience you're here to observed, not participate, and I appreciate that.

We'll now turn to the gentleman from New York, Mr. Engel, for 4 minutes.

Mr. ENGEL. That's a hard act to follow, Mr. Chairman. That's a hard act to follow. Maybe I will get Mr. Long to help me along a little bit as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Pallone.

Mr. Dorsey, welcome. Our country is facing a direct threat to our democratic institutions. We need to find ways to stop foreign adversaries like Russia and Iran from using American technology against us.

Earlier this year, Special Counsel Robert Mueller filed an indictment against a Russian internet research agency, charging that they created fake social media accounts, sometimes using American stolen identities, to sow discord and interfere with our 2016 elections. I have a copy of that indictment here, and Mr. Chairman, I would like to introduce it for the record.

Mr. WALDEN. Without objection.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Dorsey, Twitter recently took down a number of Russian- and Iranian-linked accounts after it was tipped off by a cybersecurity firm.

I am glad to see that Twitter is taking action to protect us. But do you think we should be concerned that an outside cybersecurity firm detected fraudulent activity before you did?

Mr. DORSEY. Well, I think it's really important that we have outsiders and we have an open channel to them because they're always going to approach the data and the work in a way that we may not see, and we are going to do our best to capture everything that we can and to be as proactive as we can.

But we want to leave room for others to bring a different perspective that might look at what's happening on the platform in a different way than we do.

Mr. ENGEL. So how confident are you that Twitter can identify and remove all of the fake and automated accounts linked to a foreign adversary on your platform?

Mr. DORSEY. We are getting more and more confident. But I do want to state that this is not something that has an end point that reaches perfection.

We are always going to have to stay 10 steps ahead of the newest ways of attacking and newer vectors and we are getting more agile and better at identifying those and that's showing in some of our results, which I talked about earlier in the terms of being able to identify 8 to 10 million suspicious accounts every single week and then also challenging them to see if they're humans or bots or some sort of malicious automation.

Mr. ENGEL. I understand that Twitter is now requiring some suspicious accounts to respond to recapture to prove that they're human accounts and not bots.

I was surprised to learn that you're not requiring users to do the same thing when they first sign up to Twitter. New accounts are authenticated using only an email address. Could you tell me why that is?

Mr. DORSEY. We actually do send accounts through a variety of authentication including sometimes reCAPTCHA. It really depends on the context and the information that we have. We have thwarted over a half a million accounts from even logging in in the first place because of that.

Mr. ENGEL. I understand that dealing with foreign adversaries can be difficult. Twitter may respond to one practice only to find new tactics being used to sow discord. Can you commit to us with any level of certainty that the 2018 mid-term elections in the United States will not be subject to interference by foreign adversaries using bots or other fake accounts on your platform?

Mr. DORSEY. We are committing to making it our number-one priority to help protect the integrity of the 2018 mid-terms and especially the conversation around it.

Mr. ENGEL. Let me ask you this, finally. Are you aware of foreign adversaries using any different tactics on your platform to interfere in our 2018 mid-term elections?

Mr. DORSEY. None that we haven't communicated to the Senate Intelligence Committee and any that we do find we will be communicating and sharing with them.

Mr. ENGEL. OK. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you.

Mr. WALDEN. I thank the gentleman.

We now go to the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Latta, for 4 minutes.

Mr. LATTA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And Mr. Dorsey, thanks very much for being here with us today. I would like to ask my first question on how you're protecting that—users' data. Do you collect any data from other third parties about Twitter users?

Mr. DORSEY. We don't collect data from third parties about Twitter folks. We do have embeds of tweets around the web and when people do go visit those sites we note that and we can integrate it when they do login to Twitter. But people can turn that off as well.

Mr. LATTA. How does Twitter use that data?

Mr. DORSEY. We use the data to personalize the experience specifically around—it might infer a particular interest so that we can show them specific topics or make our advertising targeting better.

Mr. LATTA. Is that sold or offered in some other forum then for the advertisers?

Mr. DORSEY. I am sorry?

Mr. LATTA. Is it sold to the advertisers?

Mr. DORSEY. Is it sold to the advertisers? No.

Mr. LATTA. OK.

Let me back up to where Mr. Shimkus was when we were talking about the verification of the blue checkmark. How easy is it for someone to obtain a verified Twitter handle and what does Twitter take to ensure it is not highlighting one political viewpoint over another through the use of that verification on the platform?

Mr. DORSEY. Well, right now it's extremely challenging because we've paused the verification program because we've found so many faults in it that we knew we needed a restart.

We do make exceptions for any representatives of government, particular brands, or public figures of interest. But we generally have paused that work.

Before that pause, we did allow anyone to submit an application to be verified and it used various criteria in order to determine if the verification was necessary.

Mr. LATTA. With that verification for that has said—you all have said that it can be removed for the activity on the on/off platform. What off platform is the basis for someone using that blue verified checkmark?

Mr. DORSEY. We look at specifically any violent extremist groups and off platform behavior for violent extremist groups, when we consider not just verification but also holding an account in the first place.

Mr. LATTA. OK. In your statement, it said in the last year Twitter developed and launched more than 30 policy and product changes designed to "foster information, integrity, and protect the people who use our service from abuse and malicious automation."

Can you share with the committee what those 30-plus policy and product changes are or highlight some and then give us the others in written?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes, and we can certainly follow up with all of you on exactly the details. But we established new models, for instance, to detect where people are gaming our systems. These are algorithms with an intent to artificially amplify.

We have new reporting flows that enable people to report tweets or accounts. We have changed policies reflective of current circumstances and what we are seeing and we have certainly done a bunch of work around GDPR, which has affected our work in general. But we will follow up with you with enumeration.

Mr. LATTA. If we could get those 30 points that would be great and submit those to the committee.

You also indicated in your written statement that the company conducted an internal analysis of members of Congress affected by the auto suggest search issue and that you'd make that information available to the committee if requested.

Will you commit to us on the committee that you will present all of Twitter's analysis as soon as that is possible after this hearing?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes, and we also hope to include this in our longstanding initiative of a transparency report around our actions.

Mr. LATTA. Thank you.

Mr. Chair, my time has expired.

Mr. WALDEN. I thank the gentleman from Ohio.

The chair recognizes the gentlelady from Florida, Ms. Castor, for 4 minutes.

Ms. CASTOR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good afternoon. Mr. Dorsey, do you feel like you're being manipulated yourself—you're part of a manipulation campaign because, when you see the majority leader of the Congress is running ads on Facebook to fundraise around allegations of anti-conservative bias on social media platforms and then you see the Trump campaign use President Trump's tweets where he claims anti-conservative bias at Google, Facebook, and Twitter, and then we saw this outburst today.

The woman jumped up, of course, with her phone so that she can get that and that's probably trying to spread on the web. And now, the Justice Department even says boy, this is so serious we have to investigate.

Does this feel like a manipulation campaign itself to you?

Mr. DORSEY. Look, as I noted in my opening, I do believe that there's growing concern around the power that companies like ours hold and the reason why is people do see us as a digital public square and that comes with certain expectations and we——

Ms. CASTOR. That's a very diplomatic answer, I have to say, because there are very serious questions. The Russian trolls created thousands of bots to influence our democracy—our elections. They're doing it in other countries across the world.

Do you feel like you have a handle on these bots? You said earlier in your testimony you ID 8 to 10 million accounts per month. Is that right?

Mr. DORSEY. Per week.

Ms. CASTOR. Per week?

Mr. DORSEY. And to thwart over half a million accounts from logging in every single day.

Ms. CASTOR. Can Twitter keep up?

Mr. DORSEY. We intend to keep up. So——

Ms. CASTOR. If they are using automated accounts, don't we reach a point where they have the ability to overwhelm content on Twitter and affect your algorithms?

Mr. DORSEY. Maybe. Others have described this as an arms race. But I believe it's very much like security. There's no perfect end point.

When you build a lock, someone else will figure out how to break it, and therefore, you can't try to design and optimize for the perfect lock. You always have to build those into the system.

Ms. CASTOR. Can't you identify the bots at least as they sign up in some way so that folks understand OK, that's a fake automated account?

Mr. DORSEY. In certain cases, we can—and it's a great point— especially through our API. There are more sophisticated ways of automation that actually script our site and our app that are much harder to detect because they're intending to look like human behavior with the slowness of human behavior rather than the speed of through an API.

So it's a little bit more complicated. It's not a challenge we are not intending to face. We are taking it head on.

Ms. CASTOR. You have some creative minds. I would think you can put all of those creative minds, all of your expertise, to work to do that.

I want to ask you a little bit about privacy. Twitter and other companies collect information on users and nonusers oftentimes without their knowledge.

Twitter's business model is based on advertising and you serve targeted advertising to users based on vast amounts of data that you collect, which raises consumer privacy concerns.

Up until last year, the privacy policy included a promise to support do not track. But then you changed your mind.

Why? Why shouldn't it be up to consumers? Why shouldn't it be the consumer's choice on tracking?

Mr. DORSEY. Well, we do allow consumers within the app to turn off tracking across the web.

Ms. CASTOR. But you're still able to build a profile on each and every user. Isn't that correct?

Mr. DORSEY. If they log into the account then yes, and we allow them to turn that off.

Ms. CASTOR. But I understand that even when they go and they opt out that you're still collecting data on them. You're still tracking them.

Mr. DORSEY. I don't believe that's the case. But happy to follow up with you with our team.

Ms. CASTOR. OK, and let's do that because I am out of time. Thank you.

Mr. WALDEN. The chair now recognizes the chairman of the Republican Conference, the gentlelady from Washington State, Cathy McMorris Rodgers, for 4 minutes.

Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Dorsey, for joining us today. I want to start off by saying that I think Twitter is a valuable tool in modern communication and it's why, back in 2011, I was spearheading an effort to get our members signed up and using this tool.

I think it's a great way to interact with the people that we represent and since then it's been amazing to see the growth of Twitter and the Twitter users all across America and the world.

It's why I think this hearing is so timely. There's a lot of serious questions that Americans have regarding tech platforms and the ones that they're using every day and the issues like data privacy, community standards, and censorship.

Today, I want to focus on Twitter's procedures for taking down offensive and inappropriate content. And as you know, there's been examples that were already shared today.

I was going to highlight the one with Meghan McCain with the altered image of a gun pointed at her when she was mourning her father's loss, and the tweet image said, "America, this one's for you."

Obviously, this offensive tweet was reported by other users, even to you, I understood. Yet, it took nearly 16 hours for there to be action to take it down.

So I just wanted to ask, first, do you think that this is a violation of Twitter's content policies and rules against violence and physical harm and that I would also like to understand how much of this is driven by the algorithm versus human content managers?

Mr. DORSEY. So it definitely is a violation and we were slow to act. The tweet was actually up for 5 hours, but 5 hours is way too long, and our current model works in terms of removing content based on reports that we receive and we don't believe that that is fair, ultimately. We don't believe that we should put the burden of reporting abuse or harassment on the victim of it.

We need to build algorithms to proactively look for when these things are occurring and take action. So the number of abuse reports that we get is a number that we would like to see go down not only because there's less abuse on the platform but because our

algorithms are recognizing these things before someone has to report them and that is our goal, and it will take some time. And meanwhile, while we——

Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS. Can you talk to me then just about what are your current policies? What are the current policies for prioritizing timely take downs and enforcement?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. So any sort of violent threat or image is at the top of our priority list in order to review and enforce, and we do have a prioritization mechanism for tweets as we get the reports.

But, obviously, this one was too slow and is not as precise as it needs to be. In this particular case, the reason why was because it was captured within an image rather than the tweet text itself.

Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS. So I think much of the concern surrounding this incident and some others has been how long it takes to remove the content when there's a clear violation, and the issue only seemed to be resolve after people publicly tweeted about it, providing a larger platform for this type of content than it ever should have had.

So I did want to hear what steps the company is going to be taking to speed up its response time to future ones to ensure these kinds of incidences don't continue.

Mr. DORSEY. In the short term, we need to do a better job at prioritizing around the reports we receive, and this is independent of what people see or report to us on the platform.

And in the longer term, we need to take the burden away from the victim from having to report it in the first place.

Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS. OK. Well, clearly, you hold a large amount of power in the public discourse. Allowing speech that incites violence could have devastating consequences and this is one way where I believe it's very important that Twitter take action to help restore trust with the people and your platform.

So and with that, I will yield back my time.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentlelady yields back.

The chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland, Mr. Sarbanes, for 4 minutes.

Mr. SARBANES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Dorsey, thank you for coming. There are a number of important topics that we could be discussing with you today but, unfortunately, the Republican majority has decided to pursue the trumped-up notion that there is a special conservative bias at work in the way Twitter operates, and that's a shame.

What worries me is this is all part of a campaign by the GOP and the right wing to work the refs—complaining of non-existent bias to force and over correction, which then can result in some actual bias going in the other direction, and we saw this actually with Facebook.

Conservatives cried bias because Facebook was seeking to make information available using reputable news sources instead of far right-wing outlets or conspiracy platforms. So Facebook got pushed into this correction and it got rid of its human editors and the result was immediately it was overrun with hoaxes that were posing as news.

I actually have questions about the subject of the hearing but I am going to submit those for the record and ask for written re-

sponses because I don't really have confidence that this hearing was convened for a serious purpose, to be candid.

Like I said, I think it's just a chance to work the ref to push platforms like yours away from the serious task of empowering people with good and reliable information.

But what is really frustrating to me about today's inquiry is that my Republican colleagues know there are plenty of other kinds of investigations that we should be undertaking in this Congress but they don't have any interest in pursuing them.

And that's not just conjecture. There's actually a list that's been circulating that Republicans put together of all the investigations that they've been blocking, sweeping under the rug because they want to hide the truth from the American people.

And this spreadsheet which is going around is pretty telling. It's circulating in Republican circles. So what are these things that they know could and should be investigated but they are determined to dismiss or bury or ignore altogether?

According to their own secret cover-up list, Republicans don't want the public to see President Trump's tax returns. They don't want the public to know about Trump's business dealings with Russia.

They're determined not to investigate Secretary of Treasury Steven Mnuchin's business dealings. They're blocking public inquiry into the personal email use of White House staff.

They're wilfully ignoring how taxpayer money has been wasted by corrupt cabinet secretaries for first class travel, private jets, large security details, office expenses, and other misused perks.

They're giving the President a pass on investigation into the motives behind his travel ban and his family separation policy.

They definitely don't want the public to see how poorly the Trump White House responded to Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico and, finally, they don't want the public to see how the administration is failing to protect our elections and guard against hacking attempts.

These are all things that deserve attention and inquiry of this Congress. But the Republicans are not going to let it happen.

Let me just go back in the last 40 seconds and talk about election security because we are 60 days away from the mid-term election. We know there are ongoing efforts to disrupt our democracy. We know these same actors, these foreign and hostile actors, are using this very platform—Twitter and others—to sow discord.

We know the public is desperate that their representatives—that's us—will act to protect their democracy and we know, thanks to this list, that the Republicans know they should be investigating our nation's election security and hacking attempts by hostile actors.

Instead, here we are, using our precious resources to feed Deep State conspiracy theories preferred by the President and his allies in Congress. It's a shame that this committee, frankly, has been drawn into such a charade.

I yield back my time.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentleman's time has expired.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Mississippi, chair of the Oversight Subcommittee, Mr. Harper, for 4 minutes.

Mr. HARPER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Dorsey, for taking this time to be here. It's a very important topic.

We all utilize Twitter. You have a very daunting task to try to work through this. It's a lot, and we've talked a lot today about algorithms and, of course, those are really only as good as the people who create them, edit them, and guide them, and algorithms have to be trained, which means, as you know—feeding them a lot of data.

My understanding is that oversight of machine learning algorithms involves examining the data sets or the search results to look for that bias. If bias is spotted, then the algorithm can be adjusted and retrained.

So I want to understand the oversight that Twitter does of its own algorithms. The algorithms that support Twitter's algorithmic time line are adjusted, if not daily, almost daily.

Why is that and what are some reasons why the algorithms would need to be adjusted daily?

Mr. DORSEY. So bias in algorithms is a rather new field of research within broader artificial intelligence and it's something that is certainly new to us as a company as well.

We do have teams who are focused on creating roadmap so that we can fully understand best practices for training, data sets, and also measuring impartiality of outcomes.

But I will say that we are pretty early in that work. We intend to get better much faster but we are very, very early. We are learning as quickly as possible, as is the industry, on how best to do this work and also how best to measure whether we are doing the right thing or not.

In terms of why we need to change the signals all the time is because when we release some of these models we release them in smaller tests and then as they go out to the broader Twitter at scale, we discover some unexpected things and those unexpected things will lead to questions, which then cause us to look deeper at the particular signals that we are using and as we recognize that there are any sort of impartiality within the outcome, we work to fix. And it is somewhat dependent upon people giving us feedback.

Mr. HARPER. And those teams that you're talking about, those are individuals, correct?

Mr. DORSEY. They're——

Mr. HARPER. That are employees of Twitter?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. Yes——

Mr. HARPER. And how do you take into account what their leanings are or their bias or life story? Does that have an input into what they determine is important or what to look for, or how do you factor that in?

Mr. DORSEY. It doesn't have an input that we use. The way we judge ourselves ultimately is are the algorithms making objective decisions—our engineers using engineering rigor, which is free of bias and free of any action that might be aligned with one particular perspective or not. So——

Mr. HARPER. OK. If I can ask this, because we only have a few moments. What are they looking for? What do they look for when they're deciding whether or not to make a change?

Mr. DORSEY. They're looking for fairness. They're looking for impartiality. They're looking for whether——

Mr. HARPER. If I can interrupt must for a moment. Who defines fairness? What is that fairness that's determined there and—because your fairness may be different than my definition of fairness, depending on what the issue or the interpretation of it is.

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. This goes back to those health indicators that we are trying to search for. So are we showing, for instance, a variety of perspectives or are we creating more echo chambers and filter bubbles.

Mr. HARPER. And as you looked at the 600,000 users and then specifically you were asked earlier about that you—you said you would follow up on the number of Democrats or Republicans in the House——

Mr. DORSEY. Where we can determine that.

Mr. HARPER [continuing]. So my question is, that's a pretty limited pool. We are talking about 435 members of the House.

Do you have that info and just don't want to discuss it or do you have to find that info on how many House members there were that were affected?

Mr. DORSEY. We do have the info and we will share it.

Mr. HARPER. Can you share it now?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes, we'll share it with you.

Mr. HARPER. Can you share it now in your testimony?

Mr. DORSEY. I don't have it in front of me.

Mr. HARPER. OK. But you will provide it?

Mr. WALDEN. The gentleman's time——

Mr. HARPER. Thank you. With that, I yield back my time.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentleman's time has expired.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. McNerney, or 4 minutes.

Mr. MCNERNEY. I thank the chairman, and I thank you, Mr. Dorsey, for the frankness you have been showing on answering our questions.

But this hearing is really a desperate effort to rally the Republican base before the November election and to please President Trump.

However, there are some real serious issues that we should be examining—for example, targeting. Some social media networks have been accused of facilitating discriminatory advertising such as housing and employment ads.

So when targeting ads, are advertisers able to exclude certain categories of users on Twitter, which would be discriminatory?

Mr. DORSEY. I am sorry. For political ads or issues ads?

Mr. MCNERNEY. No, for non-political ads. Are advertisers able to exclude groups or categories of users?

Mr. DORSEY. Advertisers are able to build criteria that include and exclude folks.

Mr. MCNERNEY. So that could end up being discriminatory?

Mr. DORSEY. Perhaps, yes.

Mr. MCNERNEY. Apart from reviewing how ads are targeted, does Twitter review how its ads are ultimately delivered and if any discriminatory effects occur as a result of its own optimization process?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes, we do do regular audits of how our ads are targeted and how they're delivered and we work to make sure that we have fairness within them.

Mr. MCNERNEY. Sure. Could you briefly describe the process that Twitter uses for making changes to algorithms?

Mr. DORSEY. In terms of making changes to ads algorithms, we are looking first and foremost at the data test sets.

We run through tests to make sure that they're performing in the way that we expect with those outcomes and then we bring them out to production, which is at scale on the live system, and then also we are doing checks to make sure that they are consistent with constraints and boundaries that we expect.

Mr. MCNERNEY. Has Twitter ever taken down an ad because of potential discriminatory effects—non-political?

Mr. DORSEY. I will have to follow up with you on that to get that information.

Mr. MCNERNEY. Well, it's difficult to know if Twitter's platforms are having discriminatory effects because there's no real way for watchdog groups to examine what's happening for potential biases.

Twitter announced now that it's making political ads searchable. How about non-political ads? Is there a way for watchdog groups to examine how non-political ads are being targeted?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. Our ads transparency center is comprehensive of all ads.

Mr. MCNERNEY. Thank you. OK, moving on to privacy—Twitter's privacy policy states that we believe you should always know what data we collect from you and how we use it and you should have meaningful control over both.

But most Americans really don't know what's happening with their data. There's a saying that if you aren't paying for a product that you are their product. Do you agree with that?

Mr. DORSEY. I don't necessarily agree with that. I do believe that we need to make more clear the exchange—what people are trading to get a free service.

I don't think we've done a great job at that, certainly within the service, and I do believe that that is important work and we should clarify it more.

Mr. MCNERNEY. Is Twitter running educational campaigns to inform users about how data is being used?

Mr. DORSEY. Not at the moment, but we should be looking at that and also the incentives that we are providing people on the platform.

Mr. MCNERNEY. I am going to follow up on some prior questions here. If users disable the track mechanism, then does Twitter still store previously collected data or does it erase it when they ask to be excluded when they opt out?

Mr. DORSEY. I believe it's erased. But we'll have to follow up with the details.

Mr. MCNERNEY. OK. And so can you commit to erasing data when people opt out?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes, but let me just make sure I understand and we understand the constraints and the ramifications of that.

Mr. MCNERNEY. OK. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. HARPER [presiding]. The gentleman yields back.

We will now take a 5-minute recess and reconvene in 5 minutes. [Recess.]

Mr. WALDEN [presiding]. Our guests will take their seats.

If our guests will take their seats and our members, we will resume the hearing now, and I recognize the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Lance, for 4 minutes for questions.

Mr. LANCE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Dorsey, I have three areas of questioning. Number one, in the Meghan McCain matter, in your opinion would the photo have been taken down if those close to the victim, including her husband, had not complained to Twitter?

Mr. DORSEY. If it would have been taken down if they had not complained?

Mr. LANCE. Correct.

Mr. DORSEY. We would have taken it down because we—I imagine we would have received other reports. Our system does work today based on reports for take down.

Mr. LANCE. Let me say that I think it's the unanimous view of this committee that 5 hours is intolerable and it was horribly violent and we are all opposed to this type of violence on Twitter, regardless of when it occurs, and certainly we hope that you do better in the future.

Number two, you state in your testimony on Page 6, "Bias can happen inadvertently due to many factors such as the quality of the data used to train our models. In addition to ensuring that we are not deliberately biasing the algorithms, it is our responsibility to understand, measure, and reduce these accidental bias. The machine learning teams at Twitter at learning about these techniques and developing a roadmap to ensure our present and future machine learning models uphold a high standard when it comes to algorithmic fairness."

Can you give the committee a time frame as to when we might expect that that would receive results that are fair to the American people, conservatives and perhaps liberals as well?

Mr. DORSEY. I can't predict a very precise time frame at the moment. This is something that is a high priority for us in terms of as we roll out algorithms understanding that they are fair and that we are driving impartial outcomes.

But it's hard to predict a particular time frame because this is not just a Twitter issue. This is the entire industry and a field of research within artificial intelligence.

Mr. LANCE. I was asked on air in New York over the weekend whether this will require regulation by the fFederal Government. After all, we are a committee of jurisdiction in this regard.

I certainly hope not, but I am sure you can understand, Mr. Dorsey, that we would like this to occur as quickly as possible because of the great concern of the American people that there not be bias, intentional or unintentional.

Mr. DORSEY. I do believe you're asking the important questions, especially as we move more of our decisions not just as a company but also as individuals to artificial intelligence and we need to understand as we use this artificial intelligence for more and more of the things that we do that, number one, that there are unbiased

outcomes and, number two, that they can explain why they made the decision in the first place.

Mr. LANCE. Thank you, Mr. Dorsey.

And then my third area of questioning, prior to 2016 did Twitter have any policies in place to address the use of the Twitter platform by foreign governments or entities for the purpose of influencing an election in the United States?

I am certainly as concerned as any member of this committee, regardless of political party, about what happened regarding Russia in 2016. And so prior to 2016, did you have any policies in place?

Mr. DORSEY. We can follow up with you. I don't have that data right now in terms of what policies against foreign actors that we had before 2016. But we did learn a lot within the 2016 elections that impacted both our technology and also the policies going forward.

Mr. LANCE. Let me state that I do not believe this is a partisan matter. This is a bipartisan matter. It is intolerable that there was any interference and, of course, we hope that it never occurs again.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentleman yields back.

The chair recognizes the gentleman from Vermont, Mr. Welch, for 4 minutes.

Mr. WELCH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

There's really two hearings going on. One is about that man in the White House who has been accusing, as you have been sitting here, the social media giants of interfering in the election and making this claim even as you were testifying and, in fact, recently said that the media giants were all in favor of Hillary Clinton in the election.

I will just give you a chance to ask whether the company Twitter had a policy of the company for either candidate in the presidential election.

Mr. DORSEY. No, we did not.

Mr. WELCH. Absolutely not, I expect, right?

The second is a job that we are not doing. We are having Mr. Dorsey here and it's a good opportunity, given his experience in his company. But these social media platforms are being abused in some cases and there's efforts that are being made at Twitter—we had Mr. Zuckerberg here some time ago—efforts being made at Facebook to deal with false accounts, to deal with hate speech, which you're trying to deal with, to deal with flat-out false information, which is not the kind of thing you want on the digital town square, right?

But the fundamental question that this committee refuses to ask itself is whether there's a role for publicly-elected officials to make some of these decisions about how you protect people from hate speech, how you protect people from flat-out false information.

Now, you mentioned, Mr. Dorsey, that your company is investigating this. You have got your team working on it, and that's a good thing.

But bottom line, do you believe that this should be something that's decided company by company or should we have rules of the road and a process that is monitored by elected officials in a regulatory agency. That's the question we are coming to.

As Mr. Harper earlier, I thought, asked a very good question—what you determine to be fair or I determine to be fair, we may disagree. So who's going to be the decider of that.

Do you believe that ultimately it should be a decision on these important questions of privacy, on these important questions of hate speech, on these important matters you're trying to contend with about the abuse of your platform should be decided on a company by company basis or should that be a public discussion and a public decision made by elected representatives?

Mr. DORSEY. First, we want to make it a public discussion. This health and increasing health in the public space is not something we want to compete on. We don't want to have the only healthy public square.

We want to contribute to all healthy public conversation. Independent of what the government believes it should do, we are going to continue to make this our singular objective——

Mr. WELCH. Right.

Mr. DORSEY [continuing]. Because we believe it's right and we are going to continue to share our approach and our work so that others can learn from it and we are going to learn from others.

So I do believe that we have worked a lot more closely with our peers in order to solve some of these common issues that we are seeing and we'll come up with common solutions, as long as we all have a mind set of this is not an area for us to compete.

Mr. WELCH. It's not an area to compete but it's also ultimately as responsible and you and other companies want to be, which I grant you you do.

Ultimately, there will be a debate between the president and his vision of what is fair and perhaps my vision of what is fair, and in the past, what we've had, we now have the FCC, the FTC, that basically were designed to address problems when we used dial-up telephones, and this committee has not done anything to address the jurisdictional issues and public policy questions and I do not believe that we should just be leaving it to the responsibility of private companies. But I appreciate the efforts the private companies are making.

And I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Dorsey.

Mr. WALDEN. Gentlemen. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Olson, for 4 minutes.

Mr. OLSON. I thank the chair and welcome Mr. Dorsey.

You mentioned in your opening statement the group called the Trust and Safety Council within Twitter.

On Twitter's BOG, it relies on the Trust and Safety Council for guidance in evaluating and developing its own community guidelines, to use your words from your statement, to create that public square for a free exchange of ideas.

And you have been pretty honest about your personal biases and the biases of people within Twitter. How pervasive are the biases on the Trust and Safety Council?

Mr. DORSEY. Well, just for some context, our Trust and Safety Council is a external organization of about 40 organizations that are global and are focused on particular issues such as online harassment or bullying or misinformation.

So these are entities that help us give feedback on our policies and also our solutions that we are coming up with but we take no direction from.

Mr. OLSON. Are these entities either Republican, Democrat, Tea Party, Green Party? Any identity with their affiliation politically that comes into Twitter's world?

Mr. DORSEY. We do have some conservative-leaning organizations but we don't add to the council based on ideology. It's on the issues.

Mr. OLSON. And I am sure this council in Twitter does not operate in this Twitter vote of secrecy a vacuum. What other groups outside of this group help Twitter influence your developing and shaping your community guidelines? Anybody else out there besides this Trust and Safety Council you rely upon?

Mr. DORSEY. Well, the Trust and Safety Council is advisory. It makes no decisions for us. Most of our decisions are made internally and we definitely take input from external folks and we look at what's happening in more of the secular trends of what's going on. But we don't take direction from anything external.

Mr. OLSON. Could we list those members of that council—the Trust and Advisory Council, those 40 entities that are your members—Trust and Safety Council?

Mr. DORSEY. They are listed on our web page.

Mr. OLSON. OK.

Mr. DORSEY. So we have an accurate list of those and we can send you——

Mr. OLSON. I apologize. I will look that up. I also want to turn to back home, and as you probably heard, a little more than a year ago southeast Texas was fighting 4 feet of water from floods from Hurricane Harvey.

A recent report from my alma mater, Rice University, highlights how platforms like Twitter played an important role in natural disasters and recovery.

The report showed the increased use of mobile devices combined with social media platforms have empowered everyday citizens to report dangerous situations and lifesaving operations. They can see people in trouble and report that very quickly.

How does Twitter prioritize emergency services information during disasters? Like, for example, if Harvey comes up and hits us—another Harvey within a month or so, because it's hurricane season?

Mr. DORSEY. We do prioritize community outreach and emergency services on the platform. We actually do have some really good evidence of this specifically with Harvey. So we saw about 27 million tweets regarding Hurricane Harvey.

In Texas, 911 systems failed and people did use Twitter to issue SOS calls and we saw as many as 10,000 people rescued from this.

So this is something that we do prioritize and want to make sure that we are working with local agencies to make sure that we have a lot strength there.

Mr. OLSON. Thank you, and close by recognizing that as a fan of the St. Louis Cardinals and a high-tech leader, I will forgive you for your Cardinals hacking into my Astros accounts. They hacked

into my Astros accounts. We won the World Series. Thank you, St. Louis Cardinals.

I yield back.

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you. Go Cards.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentleman yields back.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from New Mexico for 4 minutes—Mr. Luján.

Mr. LUJÁN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Dorsey, thank you for being here today as well.

Mr. Dorsey, yes or no—is it correct that President Trump lost followers because your platform decided to eliminate bots and fake accounts?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes.

Mr. LUJÁN. During the initial purge of bots, who lost more followers, President Trump or former President Obama?

Mr. DORSEY. I am not sure of those details. But there was a broad based action across all of Twitter.

Mr. LUJÁN. Subject to confirmation, do these numbers sound familiar—President Obama lost 2.3 million followers, President Trump lost, roughly, 320,000 followers?

Mr. DORSEY. I would need to confirm that.

Mr. LUJÁN. That's what's been reported.

So, Mr. Dorsey, based on that, is it correct that Twitter is engaged in a conspiracy against former President Barack Obama?

Mr. DORSEY. I don't believe we have any conspiracies against the former president.

Mr. LUJÁN. I don't either. I don't think you have them against this president. I want to commend you on your work with what was done associated with the evaluation following the 2016 election, which led to some of this work.

In your testimony, you note that Twitter conducted a comprehensive review of platform activity related to the 2016 election.

I assume that after your preview, you felt that Twitter had a responsibility to make changes to the way your platform operates to address future attempts at election manipulation. Is that correct?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. We are working and this is our number-one priority to help protect the integrity of 2018 elections.

Mr. LUJÁN. Further, Mr. Dorsey—and Mr. Chairman, I would ask unanimous consent to submit three articles into the record— one from January 19th, recode.net, cnbc.com, April 5th, 2018, and from techcrunch.com, August 21st, 2018.

Mr. WALDEN. Without objection.

[The information appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. LUJÁN. The first article, Mr. Dorsey, says that Twitter admits that there were more Russian trolls on its site during the 2016 U.S. presidential election as reported by recode.net, January 1, 2018.

Is that correct? Was this a revelation that Twitter shared?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes.

Mr. LUJÁN. Was that an outcome of some of the research?

Mr. DORSEY. That was an outcome of the continued work as we dug deeper into the numbers in 2016.

Mr. LUJÁN. Mr. Dorsey, is it also correct as was reported by CNBC on April 5th, 2018, that Twitter has suspended more than 1.2 million terrorism-related accounts since late 2015?

Mr. DORSEY. Correct. Yes.

Mr. LUJÁN. How did that work come about?

Mr. DORSEY. We have been working for years to automatically identify terrorist accounts and terrorist-like activity from violent extremist groups and automatically shutting that down, and that has been ongoing work for years.

Mr. LUJÁN. I would hope that this committee would commend your work in closing those accounts.

Lastly, Mr. Dorsey, Facebook and Twitter removed hundreds of accounts linked to Iranian and Russian political meddling. This was reported August 21st, 2018. Is that correct?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes.

Mr. LUJÁN. So, Mr. Dorsey, are you aware of any significant legislation that Congress has passed to protect our democracy and our elections?

Mr. DORSEY. I am not aware.

Mr. LUJÁN. The reason you're not aware is because none of it is—it's not happened. We've not done anything in this Congress.

Mr. Dorsey, after it was revealed that 87 million Facebook users' data was improperly shared with Cambridge Analytica, this committee heard testimony from Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg. This was in April of this year. It's now September.

Are you aware of any significant privacy legislation that passed this committee since Mr. Zuckerberg's testimony?

Mr. DORSEY. No.

Mr. LUJÁN. Again, nothing has happened.

Mr. Chairman, we've not done anything as well for the 148 million people that were impacted by Equifax. I think we should use this committee's time to make a difference in the lives of the American people and live up to the commitments that this committee has made to provide protections for our consumers.

I yield back.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentleman's time has expired.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia, Mr. McKinley, for 4 minutes.

Mr. MCKINLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Dorsey, for coming today.

Earlier this year, and we just referred to it in testimony, the FDA commissioner, Scott Gottlieb, reported that there were "offers to sell illegal drugs all over social media, including Twitter, and the easy availability in online purchases of these products from illegal drug peddlers is rampant and fuels the opioid crisis."

Now, Mr. Dorsey, do you believe that Twitter's platform and your controls has contributed to fueling the opioid crisis?

Mr. DORSEY. Well, first and foremost, we do have strong terms of service that prevent this activity and we are taking enforcement actions when we see it.

Mr. MCKINLEY. OK. Well, there was a recent study just published by the American Journal of Public Health that analyzed over a 5-month period of time the Twitter accounts and went through

several hundreds of thousands of those and found that there were still 2,000 illegal drug sites being sold on your account.

So my curiosity now that we have this report in our hand about the 2,000—your website states that this is prohibited.

It's against your standards and you just said that. Can you tell me how many of these sites are still up?

Mr. DORSEY. I can't tell you. I would have to follow up with you on the exact data.

Mr. MCKINLEY. But they shouldn't be up, right?

Mr. DORSEY. They shouldn't be. It is prohibited activity.

Mr. MCKINLEY. If I could, just within the last hour—Mr. Dorsey, within the last hour here's an ad for cocaine on Twitter. It's still up, and it goes on and it says that, not only from that—on that site they can buy cocaine, heroin, meth, Ecstasy, Percocet. I would be ashamed if I were you, and you say this is against your public policy and you have got ways of being able to filter that out and it's still getting on there. So I am astounded that that information is still there.

And then we have the next commercial. This is one on cocaine. Here's the next one, that here you can contact us for any medicine you want.

That doesn't say you have to have a prescription. Contact these people, and it's on your site and you said you have got ways of checking that. Just within the last hour it's still up there.

We ran into the same problem with Facebook and Zuckerberg came back to me within 2 hours later and it had all come down. They took them off. They weren't aware. They had missed it. Their algorithm had missed it.

I am hoping that in the hours after this hearing you will get back to us and tell us that these are down as well—that you're serious about this opioid epidemic.

I just happen to come from a state that's very hard hit with this. We don't need to have our social media promoting the use of illegal drugs in our children and our families.

So I hope I hear from you that you will be taking them down. Is that a fair statement?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. I agree with you this is unacceptable and we will act.

Mr. MCKINLEY. I would also hope that you would move the same resources that have complicated so much of what this hearing has been about today so that you can focus on this to make sure that this doesn't happen again—that we wouldn't have to reprimand you to follow the guidelines that you have published and you're so proud about that you have the ways of stopping opioid sales. But it's not happening.

So please take a good hard look at it and be serious about this this next time.

Thank you very much. I yield back.

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentleman yields back.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Iowa, Mr. Loebsack, for 4 minutes for questions.

Mr. LOEBSACK. I thank the chairman and ranking member for having this oversight hearing today and I thank you, Mr. Dorsey,

for being here. You have exhibited a lot of patience, you have been very diplomatic and I commend you for that.

And there have been a lot of great issues brought up, with what our most recent colleague here from West Virginia mentioned. I think that's a very, very important issue.

It's something that's affecting rural America as well as urban America as well, where I am from, and I think this discussion today has really demonstrated how important Twitter is to our national conversation—the good, the bad, the ugly, all of it—and for our democracy and I am glad we are shining a light on many issues of concern of Americans across the country with regard to Twitter and the role it plays in our society today and will continue to play into the future, obviously.

And many of my colleagues have raised legitimate concerns about data privacy, the influence of hostile actors in our elections and the spread of misinformation that can distort and harm our very democracy.

I think these are all important issues, but I want to for a second on the issue of online harassment and the use of Twitter by young people.

Social media use among the under 18 population continues to increase, as you know, and while reaching online communities may allow young people to find friendship and community in ways we cannot have imagined growing up—I certainly wouldn't have imagined—Twitter may also be creating unimaginable crises for many kids, as I am sure you're aware.

Social media in general and Twitter specifically has been used frequently for abusive purposes like harassment and cyber bullying, and Twitter has too often been too slow to respond when victims report abuse and harassment.

These interactions which adults might view as merely stressful and hurtful when we look at our Twitter account or things that are said that might hurt our feelings, whatever the case may be, for young people these can be devastating, as we know, because they're still developing and often place large importance on their reputations with their peers.

We've seen too many tragic stories of what can happen when individuals feel moved to harm themselves in response to online harassment and it should be a goal of all of us to stop that kind of bullying.

So, Mr. Dorsey, my first question is, as part of the healthiness of conversations on Twitter, are you making any specific changes to the experience of your youngest users?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. We agree with all your points and one of our areas of focus is around harassment in particular and how it is used and weaponized as a tool to silence others, and the most important thing for us is that we need to be able to measure our progress around it and understand if we are actually making any progress whatsoever. So——

Mr. LOEBSACK. There is a minimum age of 13. Is that correct that you're——

Mr. DORSEY. Yes.

Mr. LOEBSACK [continuing]. Now trying to enforce?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Does Twitter put any safety checks on the accounts of teenage users?

Mr. DORSEY. We do have various safety checks and we can follow up with your team on that.

Mr. LOEBSACK. That would be good. Does Twitter do anything to look for indications of harmful or dangerous interactions, specifically?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. Yes.

Mr. LOEBSACK. It'd be good to know that. I appreciate what those are specifically. Has Twitter conducted any research with outside independent organizations to determine how it can best combat online harassment, bullying, or other harmful interactions either for children or teenagers or for other groups of people?

Mr. DORSEY. We do this through our Trust and Safety Council. So we do have an organization that represents youth on digital platforms.

Mr. LOEBSACK. And will you commit to publishing a discreet review with outside organizations to help evaluate what more Twitter can be doing to protect our kids?

Mr. DORSEY. We haven't yet, but we will certainly work with our partners to consider this.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Because I think your three principles—impartiality, transparency, and accountability—I think we can put those into effect and operationalize those when it comes to these particular questions that I've asked you.

And so I really do appreciate your time and we can expect such a review to be provided to the public then in the future?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes.

Mr. LOEBSACK. OK. Thank you very much for your time, and I yield back, Mr. Chair.

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you.

Mr. WALDEN. I thank the gentleman from Iowa.

I recognize the gentleman from Kentucky, Mr. Guthrie, for 4 minutes.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Thank you very much. I am here. Thank you for being here today. I appreciate it.

I've had to manage the floor debates. I've been over in the Capitol building most of the afternoon. I apologize. It was a conflict of scheduling.

But glad to be here, and I know that I missed some of your answers and some of the—what we've talked about previously. But I want to further go down the path of—on a couple of things.

But many of my constituents who use Twitter perceive it to be an open market of ideas that you have referred to in your testimony, and we are obviously here today because some questions have been raised about the rules for posting content and whether some viewpoints are restricted in practice—specifically, political conservatives.

So I will come to a question of editorial judgment, but one major issue for my constituents starts with transparency and how their data is being collected and used by Twitter.

I understand you have spoken about data a few times already this afternoon. So to build on those previous questions asked by my

colleagues, what specific data points are collected on Twitter users and with whom do you share them?

Mr. DORSEY. So we infer interest around usage. So when people follow particular accounts that represent interests in basketball or politics, for instance, we can utilize that information to introduce them to new tweets that might be similar or accounts that might be similar as well.

So a lot of our inference of that data is interest. This is all viewable within the settings of the app so you can see all the interests that we've inferred about you within the settings and you can also turn them off or delete them.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Is that shared with outside parties?

Mr. DORSEY. It's not.

Mr. GUTHRIE. It's not shared? So it's only used by Twitter?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes.

Mr. GUTHRIE. And how do you obtain consent from users if—so you don't share with any third parties so you don't have to go through the consent then? OK.

When it comes to questions of editorial judgment, and I am not an expert on Section 230 but I would like to ask you about your thoughts on publisher liability.

Could you comment on what some have said—that there is a certain amount of inherent editorial judgment being carried out when Twitter uses artificial intelligence-driven algorithms or promotes content through Twitter Moments and the questions would be so where should we draw the line on how much editorial judgement can be exercised by the owner of a neutral platform like Twitter before the platform is considered a publisher?

Mr. DORSEY. Well, we do defend Section 230 because it is the thing that enables us to increase the health in the first place. It enables us to look at the content and look for abuse and take enforcement actions against them accordingly.

We do have a section of the service called Moments where we do have curators who are looking through all of the relevant tweets for a particular event or a topic and arranging them and they use a internal guideline to make sure that we are representative of as many perspectives as possible, going back to that concept of variety of perspective.

We want to see a balanced view of what people think about a particular issue. Not all of them will be as balanced as others but that's how they measure themselves against. But it is one area that people can choose to use or ignore altogether.

Mr. GUTHRIE. OK. Thanks. And then finally, I have 52 seconds left—some people say and I've heard some people say that Twitter could be classified as a media outlet due to certain content agreements you may have now or consider in the future. Do you have any comment on that?

Mr. DORSEY. I don't think the broader categories are necessarily useful. We do see our role as serving conversation. Like, we do see our product as a conversational product, a communication product, and we do see a lot of people use Twitter to get the news because we believe that news is a by-product of public conversation and allows to see a much broader view of what's currently happening and what's going on.

So that's what we are focusing on is how do people use us rather than these categories. We do have partnerships where we stream events like this one—this one is live on Twitter right now—where people can have a conversation about and everyone can benefit and engage in that conversation accordingly.

Mr. GUTHRIE. OK. Thank you. And my time has expired and I yield back.

Mr. WALDEN. The chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. Kennedy, for 4 minutes.

Mr. KENNEDY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Dorsey, thanks so much for being here. Thank you for your— over here—thank you for your patience. I know you were over on the Senate side earlier today. So thank you for enduring all these long hours of questioning.

I wanted to just make sure we were clear on a couple things. One, you have talked at length—I will get into a little bit more detail—about the mechanisms that you use to look at different aspects of content on the site.

But you have also talked about how your algorithms are a bit imperfect—how they have impacted some members of this body, Democrats and Republicans. Is that true?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes.

Mr. KENNEDY. And you have also indicated that there are others that get caught up in that, liberal activists that use perhaps profane language in response to political leaders. Is that true?

Mr. DORSEY. That may or may not be a signal that we use in terms of the content. We tend to favor more of the behavior that we are seeing and that's what I was describing in terms of the signal was the behavior of the people following these accounts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Fair enough. You yourself were actually suspended at a time. Was that not true?

Mr. DORSEY. I was.

Mr. KENNEDY. So fair to say that sometimes that——

Mr. DORSEY. There are errors. There are errors.

Mr. KENNEDY. Yes, there are, unless you engage in that destructive behavior of your own site, which you did not, right?

Mr. DORSEY. I am sorry?

Mr. KENNEDY. Unless you engaged in that own destructive behavior that you were talking about, which I don't think you did.

Mr. DORSEY. Correct.

Mr. KENNEDY. Right. So you have talked about essentially depending on those automated tools and then individual users to report tweets, behavior, one of these horrifying instances with Ms. McCain.

But that's basically the self-regulation mechanisms that you all use, right?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. Our model currently depends upon reports to remove content or to remove accounts.

Mr. KENNEDY. And why is it that you depend on those reports rather than having a more robust network within your company to do that? Why is it that you basically outsource that to users?

Mr. DORSEY. Well, we don't feel great about this. We don't believe that the burden should be on the victim in the first place. So

this is something we'd like to change. We have to build that technology and——

Mr. KENNEDY. But if you change that, right, I understand you don't feel good about putting that on the victims or the observers, but you also expressed a reticence for your company to be the arbiter as to what is decent, fair, truth.

You mentioned the term false fact earlier in your testimony. I have no idea what a false fact is. But putting that aside for a second, it seems like you're trying to basically meld this world of outside crowd sourcing what works versus internalizing some of it.

I want to try to push you on that in a minute and a half, which is not exactly fair. As you say you're trying to fix it, what are you trying to do? What does that look like?

Mr. DORSEY. We are trying to build proactive systems that are recognizing behaviors that are against our terms of service and take action much faster so that people don't have to report them.

Mr. KENNEDY. One of my Republican colleagues asked earlier, I believe, how many folks you have working on that. You said the issue wasn't so much how many people but you deflected that a bit, understanding that, I am certain, technology can advance here.

But is that two people? Is it 20 people? Is it 200 people? Do you expect to be hiring more here? That's got to be some sort of reflection of an area of focus, right?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. We have hundreds of people working on it. But the reason I don't want to focus on that number is because we need to have the flexibility to make a decision between investing to build more new technology or hiring people, and in my experience companies naturally just want to grow and that isn't always the right answer because it doesn't allow for a lot of scalability.

Mr. KENNEDY. All right, sir. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you.

Mr. WALDEN. Now we recognize the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Kinzinger, for 4 minutes.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Dorsey, thank you again for coming in here. Recognizing that there's multiple swords to free speech—there's good and bad that comes with it.

I think it's important to also mention that Twitter as well as other social media platforms has been key in liberating oppressed people and allowing oppressed people to communicate.

If you look in Syria, although that situation is not good over there, people have been able to get their message out. When chemical weapons attacks happen, we know about that very quickly because government-censored media, which would never report a chemical weapons attack, is usurped by Twitter use and Facebook and some of these others.

So part of a very big concern with that too is also foreign interference in our democracy. I am very concerned about the role that the Russians played in attempting to undermine democracy.

I don't think Russia elected President Trump, but I think it's obvious they're trying to sow instability in democracy. And so I think the more we can get a grip on this and a grasp and make people aware of just the fact of what's happening we can begin to inoculate ourselves.

I would like to ask you, though, about Twitter's practices with respect to information sharing with foreign governments.

It's a topic I addressed in the Facebook hearing with Mr. Zuckerberg and in which I think Senator Rubio broached with you a little earlier today.

On September 1st, 2015, Russian Federal Law Number 242–FZ, known by many as the data localization law, went into effect.

It requires social media companies offering service to Russian citizens to collect and maintain all personal information of those citizens on databases physically located in their country. Is Twitter in compliance with this law?

Mr. DORSEY. I need to follow up with you on that.

Mr. KINZINGER. You don't know if you're in compliance with that law right now?

Mr. DORSEY. Which law again?

Mr. KINZINGER. It's the Russian Federal Law 242–FZ, which requires—the data localization requires storage of information to be kept in Russia. This has been in the news for a couple years now so I would hope you would know.

Mr. DORSEY. I don't. I need my team follow up with you on that.

Mr. KINZINGER. You got a bunch of people back there. You can ask them if I——

Mr. DORSEY. We don't have servers in Russia.

Mr. KINZINGER. You do not have them.

Mr. DORSEY. No.

Mr. KINZINGER. OK. So you're not technically in compliance, which I think is good. So that might answer my second question— if you store user data, because there would be concern about breaches and everything else in dealing with Russia.

And legitimate and well-defined requests for data that may aid in the investigation of a crime, does Twitter make any user data available to Russian state entities including intelligence and security agencies?

Mr. DORSEY. No.

Mr. KINZINGER. OK. Let me ask you then—we've touched on this a few times—with the minute I have left—parents, young adults, teenagers using Twitter.

I think our laws haven't caught up with the new reality, the 21st century that we are in. We have to address how technology can be used to hurt innocent people.

In Illinois, there's laws to prevent people from distributing photos with malicious intent. A fake account can be created in a matter of minutes to slander someone and do damage and circulate photos.

Mr. Zuckerberg testified before this committee that Facebook is responsible for the content on Facebook, which I think you can appreciate how newsworthy that was, given the longstanding interpretations of Section 230.

Your user agreement clearly states that all content is the sole responsibility of the person who originated such content. You may not monitor or control the content posted via services and we cannot take responsibility for the content.

Your corrective actions and the statements you have made a little bit seem to be somewhat in conflict with the language. Can you

just take a little bit of time with what we have left to clarify your stance on content?

Mr. DORSEY. In what regard?

Mr. KINZINGER. Are users responsible? Is Twitter? Is it mixed? What area does Twitter have a responsibility or when you step in, why?

Mr. DORSEY. So people are responsible for their content. We have made our singular objective as a company to help improve the health of the content that we see on the service, and for us that means that people are not using content to silence others or to harass others or to bully each other so that they don't even feel safe to participate in the first place and that is what CDA 230 protects us to do is to actually enforce these actions—make them clear to people in our terms of service but also to enforce them so that we can take actions.

Mr. KINZINGER. OK. I am out of time. So I yield.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentleman's time has expired.

The chair recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Cárdenas, for 4 minutes.

Mr. CÁRDENAS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and colleagues, for participating in this important matter.

I want to follow up on some of Mr. Loebsack's line of questioning. While the President and the Republicans are criticizing social media—I think it's to whip up their base—there are real issues such as the shocking number of teens that are reporting being bullied.

Physical playground bullying is bad enough. But, increasingly, this cruelty is moving online where one click of a button sends hateful words and images that can be seen by hundreds or even thousands of people at a time.

People, kids, are being targeted for being who they are or for being a certain race or a certain sexual orientation and so on.

We know it's a pervasive problem. The First Lady has made combating cyber bullying a national priority, oddly enough. At the same time, adults are not giving kids a great example to follow.

Public figures including the President spew inflammatory harmful words every day. These actions cannot be erases and may follow their victims and families forever.

For example, how does it feel to be in front of us for hours at a time?

Mr. DORSEY. I am enjoying the conversation.

Mr. CÁRDENAS. Yes. But do you get to go home? Do you get to do what you choose to do once you leave this room?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes.

Mr. CÁRDENAS. Well, that's what's incredibly important for us to think about when we think about bullying online because it's inescapable, really, and that's really an issue that is new to us as human beings and certainly with platforms like yours it's made possible. It can take many forms.

It can be hurtful. It's about words. It's about appearances. It's about many, many things. So I think it's really important that the public understands that something needs to be done about it and what can be done is something that, hopefully, we can come to

terms with you over at Twitter and with all the millions of people who use it.

As very public examples, for example, celebrities such as 14-year-old Millie Bobby Brown, Kelly Marie Tran, Ariel Winter, and Ruby Rose have stopped using Twitter or taken breaks from Twitter because the intensified bullying that they experience on the platform have persisted. If Twitter couldn't or wouldn't help these public figures, how does it deal with all the kids who aren't famous? I want to know how you handle bullying claims for American families who are not in the news.

You have explained that Twitter investigates when it gets a report of behavior that crosses the line into abuse including behavior that harasses, intimidates, or uses fear to silence other voices.

How many reports of cyber bullying does Twitter receive each month is my first question.

Mr. DORSEY. We don't disclose that data but we can follow up with you.

Mr. CÁRDENAS. OK. Appreciate you reporting to the committee on that answer. How about Periscope?

Mr. DORSEY. The same.

Mr. CÁRDENAS. The same? OK. Look forward to that answer submitted to the committee.

And how many of those reports are for accounts of people age 18 or younger?

Mr. DORSEY. In what regard? Periscope or Twitter?

Mr. CÁRDENAS. Yes. Do you ever take into account whether or not it's a report to somebody who's been attacked who are 18 years or younger?

Mr. DORSEY. We'll have to follow up with you on that. We don't have the same sort of the demographic data that our peers do because we are not a service of profiles but of conversation.

Mr. CÁRDENAS. That makes it even more critical for us to understand that. What actions are taken in response to these reports and how long does it take for Twitter to take such a response?

Mr. DORSEY. We rank according to the severity of the report and, again, this is something that we need to improve to understand the severity of each report and how that is ranked so we can move much faster.

Ultimately, we don't want the reporting burden to be on the victim. We want to do it automatically.

Mr. CÁRDENAS. OK. Thank you very much. I am out of time.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. WALDEN. I thank the gentleman.

And we now turn to the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Griffith, for 4 minutes.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate you being here, Mr. Dorsey.

I represent that portion of Virginia that's in the southwest corner and borders a big chunk of southern West Virginia and so I had some questions similar to Mr. McKinley's questions because we are suffering from a huge opioid problem but drugs in general.

And so I know you're trying and you're working on it and you're looking for things. But last year in an edition of Scientific American, they talked about having artificial intelligence scan Twitter

for signs of opioid abuse, and it would seem to me that on some-thing that's an illegal conduct, if somebody is selling drugs that's not just an inconvenience or trying to judge whether it's truly something that's bad or—it's illegal—it would seem to me that you all ought to be able to deploy an artificial intelligence platform that would knock down anybody trying to sell illegal substances on your platform. Can you address that?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. We have to prioritize all of our models and we have been prioritizing——

Mr. GRIFFITH. Shouldn't illegal be at the very top of that model?

Mr. DORSEY. Absolutely. But we have been prioritizing a lot of what we saw in 2016 and 2017 in terms of election interference and our readiness for 2018. That does not say——

Mr. GRIFFITH. Here's what I got. I got people writing me whose kids have died because they've been in treatment, they have a re-lapse, and one of the easiest ways to get in there is to get on social media and, if scientists can use artificial intelligence to track opioid abuse in this country, it would seem to me you ought to be able to track illegal sales with artificial intelligence. Now, wouldn't you agree with that? Yes or no.

Mr. DORSEY. I agree with that. It's horrible and definitely it's something we need to address as soon as possible.

Mr. GRIFFITH. I appreciate that very much.

Now, look, I don't think there's a conspiracy. I think that there's a lot of folks out there, though, that may not have that many con-servative friends who might be living in your neighborhood or liv-ing in the area that you live in, and I looked at your advisory coun-cil.

There may be some right-leaning groups but I didn't see any right groups in there that would—look, we are not all crazy on the right. Get in there and find some groups that can help out on your advisory council.

Also, I would say to you, and I said this to Mr. Zuckerberg when he was here, it seems to me that if you don't want the government in there—and I think it's better not to have the government in there telling you all what to do as social media—that you all as a group ought to get together and come up with something.

1894 had this new-fangled thing. Electronic devices were coming onto the scene and an engineer says, maybe we ought to test all this, and they got the insurance companies and the electric manu-facturers together and they funded United Laboratories, and as an industry without government coming in and saying, this is what you have to do, they came up with standards.

It would seem to me that the social media, particularly the big actors like yourself, but others ought to come together, figure out something that's a template that works for all to make sure that we are not having political bias because I really do believe you when you say that you all aren't trying to do it.

But it's happening anyway, and I think it's an accident. I am not trying to assess blame. But I am saying you have got to help us because I don't think it's good for the internet or social media to have the government laying down rules that may or may not make sense.

But somebody's got to do something because we need to protect privacy, as you have heard, and we need to make sure there's not any political bias intentional or unintentional. Would you agree to that?

Mr. DORSEY. It's a great idea and that is why we want to be a lot more open around these health indicators that we are developing and we don't see this as a competition.

Mr. GRIFFITH. And last but not least, one of the questions that's come up as I've been discussing this issue with a lot of folks is if you do put the kibosh on somebody's post or somebody's Twitter account, can you at least tell them about it so that they have some idea so they can do the appeal? Because if they don't know about it, they're not likely to appeal, are they?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. We need a much more robust way of communicating what happened and why and also a much more robust appeals process.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Thank you very much. My time is up. I yield back.

Mr. WALDEN. I thank the gentleman.

I turn now to the gentleman from California, Mr. Peters, for 4 minutes.

Mr. PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Dorsey, for being here.

I don't know if anyone else has mentioned the breathtaking irony that Donald Trump is complaining about Twitter. It's hard for me to imagine he would have done nearly as well as he did without your platform and he's a master of using it. I think it has done some wonderful things for democracy. It's democratized democracy in many ways.

We saw that here in the House when we livestreamed the protest over guns in 2016. It brought people into the chamber in a way that I think none of us had imagined before. I use it a lot just to stay connected back home in San Diego.

I find out what's going on every day in the local government, in the local activities. I follow my baseball team's promising minor leagues through it and I think it's been a great platform.

The problem with when anyone can be on your platform, though, is that now everyone's a journalist and I just want to explore in that context your discussion of the term fairness.

Have you ever written down what you mean by fairness? And what I am sort of getting at is, you have these allegations about facts versus false equivalency that journalism has been dealing with I think more successfully recently, trying to provide truth rather than balance.

Is that something that goes into your calculation of fairness and what kind of standards do you impose on content that's on Twitter?

Mr. DORSEY. Fairness to us means that we are driving more impartial outcomes, which are more objective driven, not basing anything on bias, and we do want to be able to measure this and also make public what we find, and that's why we kicked off this initiative to understand the health of conversation and how it might trend.

One of the indicators that we are considering is shared facts and that is the percentage of conversation that shares the same facts. That is not an indication of truth or not, just what percentage of

people participating in a conversation are actually sharing the same facts versus having different facts, and we think a greater collection of shared facts leads to a healthier conversation.

So then if we understand the makeup of them currently, how can we help drive more people towards sharing more of the facts and if we can do that then we can see a lot more healthy conversations. So that's our intent.

But first, we are at the phase where we just need to measure it against those four indicators I laid out earlier, and we can send you more of our information and thinking about how we are developing these.

Mr. PETERS. I would love to hear that. One of the problems with everyone having their own facts is it's very hard to have conversations about difficult issues.

One that I am concerned about is climate change. If everyone has a different understanding of the facts it's hard to agree on what to do about it. Mr. Sarbanes raised the concept of this hearing being a way to work to refs. I don't know if you recall that reference.

Is that something that we should be concerned about? Is that something that strikes you as going to have an impact on your business, the notion that the committee would be working the refs with the majority?

Mr. DORSEY. I honestly don't know what that means so——

Mr. PETERS. OK. Good. So the idea is that they're going to put so much pressure on you to avoid pressure from us that you will change your behavior in a way that's not fair. Is that something that we should be concerned about?

Mr. DORSEY. Well, I think we've articulated what we think is important and what we are trying to drive and I see the role of government as being a checkpoint to that and also being a clarifier and asking questions of our path and, I do believe the system is working in that regard.

So we are putting out what we believe is critical for us to focus on and if there are disagreements en masse in feedback we get, we will certainly change our path.

Mr. PETERS. Well, I appreciate your testimony today. My time has expired and I thank the chairman.

Mr. WALDEN. I thank the gentleman.

The chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Bilirakis, for 4 minutes.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it. Thank you very much, and thank you for your testimony, Mr. Dorsey.

Mr. Dorsey, I've heard from my local Pasco County school district—that's located on the west coast of Florida—it has consistently responded to threats of school violence.

I've heard from the superintendent, Kurt Browning, who's doing an outstanding job, that it faced as many as 19 threats in one week. Many of those threats have come from individual tweets.

News reports and studies show this is a widespread problem, as you can imagine. What is your company's process for notifying local law enforcement officials and school districts when these threats emerge?

Mr. DORSEY. We do have outreach to local entities and local law enforcement when we see anything impacting someone's physical

security. We can follow up with you on exactly what those implementations are.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Well, how effective have they been? Can you give me——

Mr. DORSEY. I am not sure how to determine the efficacy. But we can follow up with you on that and share what we have.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Please do. Please do.

And would you consider an internal process in which Twitter can work directly with the school districts to address these tweets quickly? Obviously, time is of the essence.

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. One of the things we are always looking for is ways to quickly, especially where it impacts physical security, ways to quickly alert us to things that we might be able to help with in terms of the conversation around it.

So we are certainly open to it and open to an implementation that we think we can scale.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Let me ask you a question. How did you determine the—and I know social media, Facebook too—minimum age of use, 13, and are you considering raising that age?

Mr. DORSEY. We, I don't believe, have considered raising the age but we do determine it upon sign-up.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. OK. Thank you.

The next question—according to Twitter's website, Twitter's Moments are defined as "curated storage showing the very best of what's happening on Twitter and customized to show you topics that are popular or relevant so you can discover what is unfolding, again, customized to show you topics and what's relevant so you can, again, what is unfolding on Twitter in an instant."

In my experience, Twitter Moments more often features a specific point of view or political narrative, and the question is how are these Moments—again, "Moments," compiled and prioritized.

You said earlier that Moments are selected by employees publishing content. What are the internal guidelines the company has set to determine what makes a Moment?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. So we, first and foremost, take a data-driven approach to how we arrange these Moments and, again, these are collections of tweets that we look at, based on any particular topic or event, and we bring them into a collection, and we use a data-driven approach meaning that we are looking for the amount of conversation, first and foremost, that's happening around a particular event, and then as we rank that, then we go into impartiality to make sure that we are looking for opportunities to show as many perspectives as possible.

So a variety of perspectives and a high score on a variety of perspectives is beneficial to the people reading because they can see every side of a particular issue or a particular event.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. OK. Very good. I thank you and look forward to getting some information on this particular——

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you.

Mr. BILIRAKIS [continuing]. Following up and we'd like to have you back, in my opinion, even though I am not the chairman, to see the progress that you have made with regard to these issues.

Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you.

Mr. WALDEN. I thank the gentleman.

The chair recognizes the gentlelady from Michigan, Mrs. Dingell, for 4 minutes.

Mrs. DINGELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Dorsey.

You're actually one of my husband's heroes. I am married to what we affectionately call around here the Dean of Twitter who, quite frankly, at 92 is better on Twitter than probably everybody in this room, which means I know the power of this platform and I think it's a very important tool.

But to those who have been doing conspiracy theories and politicizing this, it is not only Meghan McCain—that I, myself, have had some of those same threats and those same caricatures and, quite frankly, I was blissfully ignorant until law enforcement brought it to my attention.

So I do think that the threats that are happening on Twitter do need to be better understood and more quickly acted upon.

But I would rather ask some questions right now because you're educating all of us and we all need to understand social media better, period, and its tool in the background.

So I would like to ask some questions about privacy and the use of machine learning and artificial intelligence on the platform.

You have spoken about how you are trying to deploy machine learning to combat the disinformation, the harassment, the abuse, and I want to build on what some of my other colleagues have said about the black box nature of these algorithms and the lack of what they call accountability but how we improve it.

So building on what actually my colleague, Representative Harper, was saying, what type of data sets do you use to train AI and how often do you retrain them?

Mr. DORSEY. That's a great question. We try to use data sets that will be predictive of what we would expect to see on the service and as we train these models we are certainly using previous experiences and outputs that we've seen in natural uses of how people use the system and then also trying to test some edge cases as well.

But, again, all these tests are great and help us understand what to expect but, ultimately, they're not really put to the test until they're released on production and we actually see how people use it and how it's affecting usage and also what might be unexpected, which I talked about earlier.

So that's training. AI is not a new field but the application of AI at scale is rather new, especially to us and our company.

So there are best practices being developed that we are learning as quickly as possible from and, more importantly, trying to measure those outcomes in terms of bias and impartiality.

Mrs. DINGELL. So as we build on that, do your engineers have an ability to see and understand why an algorithm made certain decisions?

Mr. DORSEY. That is a great question because that goes into another field of research in AI which is called explainability, which is encouraging engineers to write a function that enables the algorithm to describe how it made the decision and why it made the decision and I think that is a critical question to ask and one to

focus on because we are offloading more and more of our decisions to these technologies, whether they be companies like ours who are offloading our enforcement actions to algorithms or ranking actions to algorithms or even personally.

I am wearing an Apple watch right now and it tells me when to stand. I've offloaded a decision to it, and if it can't explain the context to why it made that decision or why it's taking that action, it becomes quite scary.

So I do believe that is a valid form. It is extremely early in terms of research—this concept of explainability—but I think it will be one that bears the greatest fruit in terms of trust.

Mrs. DINGELL. For the record because I am going to be out of time. You have talked about how these algorithms have missed things. It's made mistakes. What is an acceptable error rate? You can do that for the record later, but I just——

Mr. DORSEY. We'll come back.

Mr. WALDEN. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Johnson, for 4 minutes.

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Dorsey, thank you for being here today. Is it safe to say that an algorithm is essentially a decision tree that once it's turned into software it operates on a data set as input and it produces a desired action or result? Would that be a good layman's term of what an algorithm is?

Mr. DORSEY. For a general algorithm, yes. But it gets a lot more complicated.

Mr. JOHNSON. I know it gets a lot more complicated than that and I am going to get into the complication. I am a software engineer by trade and I've written thousands and thousands of algorithms.

There's as much art that goes into writing an algorithm as there is science. Would you agree with that?

Mr. DORSEY. I agree with that.

Mr. JOHNSON. So and, essentially, there's a part of the heart of the algorithm writer that's writing that algorithm, correct?

Mr. DORSEY. In——

Mr. JOHNSON. If you have got a painter—if you put 10 painters in 10 different rooms and say, paint me a picture of a tree, you're going to get Charlie Brown's Christmas tree in one room.

You're going to get a tree with an oak tree and a swing and grass underneath it. You're going to get 10 different pictures of a tree. If you ask 10 software engineers to develop you an algorithm you're going to get 10 different solutions to solve that problem, right?

Mr. DORSEY. Which is why testing is so important because we are looking for other algorithms.

Mr. JOHNSON. Which is why testing is so important. What kind of testing do you guys do with your algorithms to make sure that that innate bias that's inevitable because you—it's already been admitted that Twitter has got bias in your algorithms because you have acknowledged that and you have tried to correct it.

So how do you go about weeding out that innate bias? Do you do any peer reviews of your algorithms before you send them to production?

Mr. DORSEY. We do do those internally, yes.

Mr. JOHNSON. Well, can't you modify your algorithms, especially in this age of artificial intelligence to be more intelligent in identifying and alerting on specific things.

In the automotive industry today we've got artificial intelligence in automobiles that doesn't just tell you that there's in front of you. It actually puts the brakes on. It takes some action and it's instantaneous because it saves lives.

Is it unreasonable to think that Twitter could not modify its algorithms to hit on illegal drug sales, on violent terminology, and those kinds of things and make faster alerts to stop some of this?

Mr. DORSEY. Not unreasonable at all. It's just a matter of work and doing the work and that is our focus.

Mr. JOHNSON. OK. Well, I would submit to you that you need to do that work and you need to get to it pretty quick.

Let me ask you another quick question. The trending topics list is an important issue and I want to understand that one. Can you tell me how a topic is determined to be trending? Give me some specific—what's it based on?

Mr. DORSEY. Well, so in a tweet when you use a particular key word or hashtag, when the system notices that those are used en masse in aggregate, it recognizes that there's a velocity shift in the number of times people are tweeting about a particular hashtag or trend and it identifies those and then puts them on that trending topic list.

Now, there is a default setting where we personalize those trending topics for you and that is the default. So when you first come on to Twitter, trending topics are personalized to you and it's personalized based on the accounts you follow and how you engage with tweets and what not.

Basically, we could show you all the trending topics happening in the world but not all of them are going to be relevant to you. We take the ones that are relevant to you and rank them accordingly.

Mr. JOHNSON. So it's trending based on what's relevant to you, essentially?

Mr. DORSEY. Correct.

Mr. JOHNSON. OK. My time is up. But let me just say this, and I said this to Mr. Zuckerberg. In the absence of massive federal regulations telling you guys how to do your business, the responsibility bar goes really, really high.

And I think, coming back to what Mr. Griffith says, I think you guys need to look at an outside entity of some sort to help you bounce off ideas of how to address this stuff before legal or market forces drive you to a place that you're not going to want to go.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. JOHNSON. I yield back.

Mr. WALDEN. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from New York, Mr. Tonko, for 4 minutes.

Mr. TONKO. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Dorsey, for all the time you have given the committee.

I want to echo my dismay that our Republican colleagues have chosen to hold this hearing to rile up their base and give credence to unsupported conspiracies when there are real issues here that

run to the heart of our civic life that deserve our immediate attention.

It is unfortunate and a missed opportunity on behalf of our majority.

Mr. Dorsey, I know that Twitter has said it is taking steps to help make political advertising more transparent on the platform and is now working to do something similar with issue ads.

Unfortunately, looking at Twitter today, I am concerned that even for political ads you haven't made anything clear necessarily to consumers. On some platforms, and Facebook for an example, if a user visits a political or politician's website, that user can immediately see all the advertisement that she or he has purchased on the platform.

On Twitter, I have to find a separate resource—the ads transparency center—and then search for the politician to see what promotion she or he purchased in the past. It is, indeed, difficult to find and seems ill advised, particularly when your competitors are doing it differently and perhaps better.

So did Twitter do any research regarding how best to make election advertising information available to its consumers?

Mr. DORSEY. We did do some research. But this is not a stopping point for us. So we want to continue to make ad transparency something that is meeting our customers where they are so that it is relevant so it's easy to get to.

We did some things a little bit differently. We have launched the issue ad feature of the ad transparency as well. But we also enabled anyone, even without a Twitter account, to search Twitter ads to see who is behind them and also the targeting criteria that are used.

Mr. TONKO. Thank you. And have you kept any statistics that you can share with this committee today about how often average consumers even searched the ads transparency center?

Mr. DORSEY. We do keep statistics and track usage of all of our products. We can certainly follow up with your office to give you some relevant information.

Mr. TONKO. Thank you. And I know that you said this is not a stopping point—that you're still exploring—but why is it that it appears that you're making it harder for Americans to see who's trying to influence them?

Mr. DORSEY. That's not our intention and, we do know we need to do a lot more work to meet people where they are, and in the interface there's just some design choices that we need to make in order to do this the right way.

Mr. TONKO. What's more, it seems that political advertising information that Twitter makes available only shows advertisements served in the past 7 days. Is that correct?

Mr. DORSEY. I am not aware right now of the constraints on it. But we'll follow up with you.

Mr. TONKO. OK. But if that is correct, that seems vastly insufficient, given that political campaigns in the U.S. last months, if not years.

So, Mr. Dorsey, why doesn't your platform reflect that insight and disclose political advertising beyond 7 days if that, indeed, is the time frame?

Mr. DORSEY. We'll look into that.

Mr. TONKO. OK. I appreciate that immensely, and I thank you. And I yield back, Mr. Chair, the balance of my time.

Mr. WALDEN. I thank the gentleman.

We now go to the gentleman from Missouri, Mr. Long, for 4 minutes.

Mr. LONG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Dorsey, for being here.

I think it's pretty easy to understand why you have been as successful as you have because your mannerisms today, your decorum—a lot of people come into these hearings and they practice and they coach them and they tell them how to act. It's obvious that no one did that for you.

You are who you are and that shows today and I think that that has a lot to do with how successful you have been. So thank you for your time and being here today.

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you.

Mr. LONG. I do have a couple of questions. Mr. Bilirakis asked you about Moments. I am not sure exactly what Moments are but when my staff got a hold of me a couple days ago they said, well, what do you want to ask Mr. Dorsey—where do you want to take this—what direction—do a little research.

And I just, off the top of my head I said, well, let me send you some stuff so I started shooting them emails, and these are emails that I received—they're called highlights, as you're familiar with— daily highlights to my personal Twitter account about the most interesting content from Twitter that is tailored just for me.

And when we are talking about impartiality and, somebody said the Republicans are all full of conspiracy theories over here. You're a thoughtful guy. I just want you to take into consideration what I am going to say and do with it what you want to.

But if you're saying hey, we are impartial—we really are—this, that and the other, out of the—I just started firing off emails to my lege director and I sent him 14 emails of highlights that were sent to me just in the last few days and I guess, I don't know, it might have been over 14 days—I don't know how often you send them.

But there's six highlighted tweets per email. So that's a total of 84 recent examples that you all picked out and said hey, this conservative congressman from Missouri—and thank goodness you're a Cardinal fan—but and you being from Missouri—but this conservative congressman that we found out what this guy wants to read and here it is.

Twelve of them of the 84 were from Glenn Thrush, reporter for the New York Times; Maggie Haberman—you sent me nine from her—White House correspondent for the New York Times, political analyst for CNN; Chris Cillizza, political commentator for CNN; David Frum, senior editor at The Atlantic and MSNBC contributor; Nicole Wallace, current anchor of Deadline White House and chief political analyst for MSNBC and NBC News; Sam Stein, former political editor of the Huffington Post, politics editor at the Daily Beast and MSNBC contributor; Rep. Eric Swalwell, Democratic congressman from California's 15th District; Robert Costa, national political reporter for the Washington Post, a political analyst for NBC News and MSNBC; Kaitlan Collins, White House cor-

respondent for CNN; Michael Schmidt, New York Times correspondent and contributor to MSNBC and NBC; Tommy Vietor, former spokesman for President Obama; David Corn, MSNBC analyst and author of the "Russian Roulette" book; Kasie Hunt, NBC News correspondent, host of MSNBC Show; Richard Painter, commentator on MSNBC and CNN, outspoken critic of Trump; David Axelrod, commentator for CNN, former chief strategist for Obama's campaign, senior advisor to Obama.

I did not cherry pick these. Here's a Republican—a former Republican. I am not sure what he is now. But you did send me one from Bill Kristol, founder and editor of the "At Large Weekly" and a vocal supporter and a never Trumper guy, and you did send me another one from Fox News—I will put that in there—Brit Hume, senior political analyst for Fox News channel.

I want to submit these for the record so you can peruse them at your leisure. That's the only two I remember being Republican—Kristol—and out of 84 they were handpicked, tailored for me because they know what I want to read. But Glenn Thrush, Chris Cillizza—it just goes on and on.

I have, I guess, 14 pages of them here, and they're all pretty much Trump bashing. They're all pretty much Trump bashing. If you just go right down the line, one after another.

So just, if you will, take that into consideration and, again, I do—and I think that there was a fake news tweet sent out yesterday by a guy that was sitting here earlier and he's not here anymore.

Reporter John Gizzi sent out a fake news tweet yesterday. He said he was headed to the Nationals' park—that he was going to watch them beat the Cardinals. That was fake news.

[Laughter.]

I yield back.

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you. It doesn't sound like we served you well in matching your interests.

Mr. DUNCAN [presiding]. The gentleman's time has expired.

The chair will recognize Ms. Schakowsky.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

So while you have been sitting here all day—we appreciate that—according to the Wall Street Journal, the Justice Department to examine whether social media giants are "intentionally stifling" some viewpoints, and it quotes the President.

It says that in an interview Wednesday morning with the Daily Caller, Mr. Trump accused social media companies of interfering in elections in favor of Democrats: "The truth is they were all on Hillary Clinton's side," he said.

Would you agree with that characterization by the President?

Mr. DORSEY. No.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. The other thing it says in this article is that they expressed—I guess it's in the Senate—they expressed contrition for allowing their platform to be abused in the past while pledging to protect the system during the 2018 mid-term elections a priority.

First of all, I just want to say about contrition, we heard from Facebook's CEO, Mr. Zuckerberg, one example after another after another through the years—you haven't been there that long, Twitter—of contrition. We are sorry, we are sorry, we are sorry.

But even today, if I had listed well, we made a mistake—we are going to do better, et cetera.

So, first let me ask you, what are you going to do to make sure that the election is not in some way influenced by foreign governments in an inappropriate way?

Mr. DORSEY. Well, this is our number-one priority in our information quality efforts——

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. I hear that.

Mr. DORSEY [continuing]. And our broader health and we have benefited from learning from recent elections like the Mexican election and were able to test and refine a bunch of that work accordingly.

So we are doing a few things. First, we are opening portals that allow partners and journalists to report anything suspicious that they see so that we can take much faster action.

Second, we are utilizing more technology to identify where people are trying to artificially amplify information to steer or detract the conversation.

Third, we have a much stronger partnership with law enforcement and federal law enforcement to make sure that we are getting a regular cadence of meetings that we are seeing more of the trends going on and that we can understand intent behind these accounts and activities so we can act much faster as well.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Well, I appreciate that because that's where the emphasis ought to be. I have to tell you, the President and the Republicans have concocted this idea of a supposed anti-conservative bias to, it seems to me, distract from the fact that their majority has absolutely done nothing to prevent foreign governments from using social media platforms to spread misinformation, and if we don't do that then I think our democracy itself is actually at stake.

But also, in terms of your motives, Mr. Dorsey, the majority of Twitter's revenue comes from selling advertising on the platform, right?

Mr. DORSEY. Correct.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. And Twitter is a for-profit publicly-traded company. Is that right?

Mr. DORSEY. Correct.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. And generally speaking, businesses, political campaigns, and other advertisers choose to advertise on Twitter because Twitter promises to deliver targeted highly-engaged audience. Is that what you'd say?

Mr. DORSEY. Correct.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. So you actually said that you are incentivized—it says Twitter is incentivized to keep all voices on the platform. Is that correct?

Mr. DORSEY. No. That is where we need to make sure that we are questioning our own senses but also we understand that making health our top and singular priority means that we are going to be removing accounts and we have done so.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. OK. I am quoting, actually—that you said from a business perspective Twitter is incentivized to keep all voices on the platform.

Mr. DORSEY. Oh. All perspectives. But I thought you meant more the accounts. But we do want to make sure that we believe we are used as a public square for people and that all perspectives should be represented.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Thank you, and thank you for being here.

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you.

Mr. DUNCAN. The gentlelady's time has expired. The chair will recognize the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. Bucshon.

Mr. BUCSHON. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Dorsey, for being here.

I just want to say I don't see this as particularly partisan. The hearing, I think, is completely appropriate and relevant to the American people across political ideology.

I would respectfully disagree with my Democrat colleagues and some of the comments they've made and I would just like to say this.

Ironically, in my view, they're the ones most likely to want heavy-handed government intervention into your industry and I would argue that people like me, Republicans, are trying to help you avoid it. So take that for what it's worth.

You have implied and you have said that Twitter is taking all these different actions to improve all the things that you're doing as it relates to algorithms and other things.

What's your timeline? And I know you have said that this is an ongoing process, right. You're not going to get a checkered flag, right. But what's your timeline for getting some of this really done?

Mr. DORSEY. We want to move as fast as possible, and I know that's a frustrating answer because it's really hard to predict these outcomes and how long they may take.

But it is our singular objective as a company in terms of increasing the health of the public square that we are hosting.

Mr. BUCSHON. Yes. Thank you.

Is there any way that users and third parties can verify whether or not their political standards or judgments are embedded accidentally into Twitter's algorithms?

I guess I am asking are your algorithms publicly available for independent coders to assess whether there is bias, whether it's intended or unintended?

Mr. DORSEY. Not today. But that is an area we are looking at and we'd love to be more open as a company including our algorithms and how they work.

We don't yet know the best way to do that. We also have to consider in some cases when we are more clear about how our algorithms work it allows for gaming of the system, so people taking advantage of it.

Mr. BUCSHON. Yes.

Mr. DORSEY. So we need to be cognizant of that, and it's not a blocker by any means.

Mr. BUCSHON. Oh, I understand.

Mr. DORSEY. We'd love for it to be open. But that's a big understanding that we need to understand how to correct.

Mr. BUCSHON. Yes, I totally get that. I could see where if the algorithms were there, then smart people are going to find ways to subvert that, right. And there's probably some proprietariness

there that you may have a competitor in the future named something else and you don't want your processes out there. I totally respect that.

Mr. DORSEY. Although this is an area we don't want to compete. We do not want to compete on health. We want to share whatever we find.

Mr. BUCSHON. OK. And I think many people have said, all of us, whether we know it or not, have some inherent biases based on where we grew up, what our background is, what our life experiences are.

So I am really interested in how you recruit to your company, because I think—obviously, the tech industry has had some criticism about its level of diversity.

But I think it would be important to get your feel for if you're going to avoid group think and you're creating algorithms, how do you recruit and—you're not going to ask somebody, hey, are you pro-Trump or against Trump. I get that, right. But I would argue you want to have people from everywhere, different races, men, women, different political view, because my impression is, diversity is, in some respects, in certain industries fine as long as it's not political diversity.

So can you give me a sense of how you build the team?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. This is an active conversation within the company right now. We recognize that we need to decentralize our workforce out of San Francisco. Not everyone wants to be in San Francisco. Not everyone wants to work in San Francisco. Not everyone can afford to even come close to living in San Francisco and it's not fair.

So we are considering ways of how we hire more broadly across every geography across this country and also around the world and being a lot more flexible. It's finally the case that technology is enabling more of that and we are really excited about this and I am personally excited to not consider San Francisco to be a headquarters but to be a more distributed company.

Mr. BUCSHON. Yes. I just want to say I think it's very important to make sure that companies like yours do get a variety of perspectives within your employee base.

Thank you.

Mr. DORSEY. I agree.

Mr. BUCSHON. Thanks for being here.

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you.

Mr. DUNCAN. The chair will recognize the gentleman from California, Mr. Ruiz, for 4 minutes.

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Dorsey, you have had a long day. You're in the home stretch.

So thank you for being with us today. I am glad my colleagues on this side of the aisle have been focusing on the issues that are very important to our democracy and how we combat foreign influences and bots and harassment and other challenges on your platform.

I would like to take a step back and look more precisely at the makeup of Twitter's users and I am not sure we or even possibly you have a true understanding of who is really using your services and your website.

So as you have said previously, the number of followers an account has is critically important, both in terms of the prominence of an account but also the ranking of algorithms that push content to users.

So when tens of thousands of new accounts created every day both real and fake and by humans and bots alike, I am concerned about the accuracy of those numbers we are using here today and the implications those numbers have.

So you have said that 5 percent of your accounts are false or spam accounts. Is that correct?

Mr. DORSEY. Correct.

Mr. RUIZ. OK. And how do you measure that? Is that at any one time or is that over the course of any one year? How did you come to the conclusion of 5 percent?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. We have various methods of identification, most of them automations and machine learning algorithms to identify these in real time, looking at the behaviors of those accounts and——

Mr. RUIZ. So that's how you identify which ones are false. But how did you come up with the 5 percent estimate of total users are fake?

Mr. DORSEY. Well, it's 5 percent, we believe, are taking on spammy like behaviors, which would indicate an automation or some sort of coordination to amplify information beyond their earned reach.

So we are looking at behaviors and that number——

Mr. RUIZ. So you just take that number versus the total number of users?

Mr. DORSEY. The total active, and that number has remained fairly consistent over time.

Mr. RUIZ. OK. In 2015, you reported that you had 302 million monthly active users on your platform. In 2016, it was 317 million monthly active users. In 2017, 330 million, and in 2018 you said 335 million monthly active users.

How do you define monthly active users?

Mr. DORSEY. It's someone who engages with the service within the month.

Mr. RUIZ. So is that somebody who tweets or somebody who retweets or somebody who just logs in?

Mr. DORSEY. Someone who just logs in.

Mr. RUIZ. OK. And is it 5 percent of those yearly numbers that you believe to be somebody who just simply logs in?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes, who are taking on spam like behaviors or spam like threats.

Mr. RUIZ. And has the 5 percent been consistent over the years?

Mr. DORSEY. It has been consistent.

Mr. RUIZ. OK. So we have heard reports of hundreds of Twitter accounts run by just one person. It's my understanding that each of those accounts are counted as separate monthly active users. Is that correct?

Mr. DORSEY. Correct.

Mr. RUIZ. OK. Good. So my concern with these questions is that the number of followers an account has, which is, obviously, comprised of the subset of those 335 million Twitter users, is an incred-

ibly important metric to your site and one you even said this morning in front of the Senate presented too much of an inventive for account holders.

Based on what we've heard, though, it appears that the number of followers may not be an accurate representation of how many real people follow any given account.

For example, last year Twitter added, roughly, 13 million users but early today you said you are flagging or removing 8 to 10 million per week.

How can we be confident the 5 percent fraudulent account number you are citing is accurate?

Mr. DORSEY. Well, we are constantly updating our numbers and our understanding of our system and getting better and better at that. We do see our work to mitigate——

Mr. RUIZ. Before we end the time, I am going to ask you one question and you can submit the information, if you don't mind, and that's basically in medicine or any screening utility—I am a doctor—for any screening utility we use a specificity and sensitivity and that just measures how well your methodology works. And the higher specificity the lower false positive you have. The higher sensitivity the lower false negatives that you have.

In this case, you can see the different arguments is how many false positives versus how many false negatives. We are concerned that you're going to have false negatives with the Russian bots.

Some are concerned that your false positive you're taking out people that legitimately should be on there.

So if you can report to us what those specificity and sensitivity of your mechanism in identifying bots, I would really appreciate that. That will give us a sense of where your strengths are and where your weaknesses are.

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you.

Mr. DUNCAN. Point's well-made and the gentleman's time has expired.

The chair will go to Mr. Flores from Texas.

Mr. FLORES. I thank you, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate, Mr. Dorsey, you showing up to help us today.

If you don't mind, I am going to run through a bunch of questions it will take and ask Twitter to supplementally answer those later, and then I have a question or two at the close that I would like to try to get asked.

Our local broadcasters provide a valuable service when it comes to emergency broadcasting or broadcasting of different events that happen. You heard Mr. Burgess earlier talk about the TV station that was attacked this morning and the first notice he got was on Twitter.

So my question is this. Should Twitter be considered a trusted advisor in the emergency alerting system and how do you manage the intentional or unintentional spread of misinformation or abuse by bad actors on this platform during times of emergency? And you can supplementally answer that, if you would.

And then the next question is—this has to do with free speech and expression—does Twitter proactively review its content to determine whether a user has violated its rules or is it only done once another user voices the concerns.

And the next question is do you have a set of values that Twitter follows when it makes decisions about flagged content or is it done on a case by case basis and which individuals at Twitter make judgement calls.

The next one has to do with how do you—this is a conceptual question I would like you to try to answer, and that's how do you balance filtering versus—and moderating versus free speech.

I mean, there's always this tenuous balance between those two. So if you could, I would like to have you respond to that.

Then we need some definition. This is an oversight hearing. We are not trying to legislate. We are just trying to learn about this space.

And so I would like to have Twitter's definitions of behavior, Twitter's definition of hateful conduct, Twitter's definition of low quality tweets.

An explanation of the abuse reports process, and also you said you had signals for ranking and filtering. I would like to know how that process works, if we can.

I would like to know more about the Trust and Safety Council, how it works, and its membership—some of that's publicly available, some of it's not—and then the Twitter definition of suspicious activity.

And here's the question I have in the last minute that I have that I would like you to respond to. A lot of the social media space has been through some tumultuous times over the past 18 to 24 months, and so my question is this.

If we were to have a hearing a year from now, what would be the three biggest changes that Twitter has made that you would share with Congress?

Mr. DORSEY. That's an excellent question. So I believe, first and foremost, we see a lot of progress on increasing the health of public conversation.

Second, I believe that we have reduced a bunch of the burden that a victim has to go through in order to report any content that is against them or silencing their voice or causing them to not want to participate in the public space in the first place.

And then third, we have a deeper understanding of the real-world effects off platform of our service both to the broader public and also to the individual as well, and those are things that I think we can and will make a lot of progress on, the latter one being probably the hardest to determine. But I think we are going to learn a lot within these 2018 elections.

Mr. FLORES. OK. I thank you for your responses and I know you have got team people back there that took good notes on the other ones that I left for supplemental disclosure.

Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. COSTELLO [presiding]. Yields back.

The gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Rush, is recognized for 4 minutes.

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Dorsey, I certainly want to thank you for being here and for really enduring this marathon of questions.

I want to go back to the beginning of this hearing where Mr. Pallone discussed the need for an independent third party institute to

conduct a civil rights audit of Twitter and I am not sure of your answer. It was kind of vague to me.

So I ask the question, are you willing to commit to or are you saying that Twitter will consider Mr. Pallone's request? Is that a commitment or is that just a consideration?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. We are willing to commit to working with you and staff to understand how to do this best in a way that is actually going to show what we can track and the results.

But I think that is a dialogue we need to have.

Mr. RUSH. Thank you.

Chicago is experiencing an epidemic of violence particularly as it relates to our young people and Facebook has already been confirmed as an asset that is being used by some of these young people to commit violence.

And my question to you, are you aware of where Twitter was used to organize or perpetuate any form of street violence anywhere in the Nation and, certainly, in Chicago?

Mr. DORSEY. We do look at cases and reports where people are utilizing Twitter and coordinating in terms of having off-platform violence.

We do have a violent extremist group policy where we do look at off-platform information to make judgments.

Mr. RUSH. And is there an automatic process for the removal of such posts?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. There is a reporting process. But, again, it does require right now for removal of the post a report of the violation.

Mr. RUSH. So are they removed, though?

Mr. DORSEY. Sorry?

Mr. RUSH. Are they removed?

Mr. DORSEY. How many have been removed? We——

Mr. RUSH. No. Have you removed any?

Mr. DORSEY. Have we removed any? We do often remove content that violates our terms of service. We have a series of enforcement actions that ranges from a warning to temporary suspension and removal of the offending tweet all the way to a permanent suspension of the—of the account.

Mr. RUSH. All right. In that regard, do you also have any authoritative actions that you have taken to inform local police departments of these kind of activities?

Mr. DORSEY. We do have partnerships with local enforcement and law enforcement agencies all over the world and we do inform them as necessary.

Mr. RUSH. All right. Let me ask you one other final question here. I want to switch. Your legal and policy chief told Politico yesterday, "There is not a blanket exception for the President or anyone else when it comes to abusive tweeting."

Do you consider President Trump's tweets to be abusive or harmful at all?

Mr. DORSEY. We hold every account to the same standards in the consistency of our enforcement. We do have a clause within our terms of service that allows for public interest and understanding of public interest per tweet and we definitely weigh that as we consider enforcement.

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Chairman, my time is——

Mr. COSTELLO. Yes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Chairman, I seek unanimous consent to submit a statement for the record on behalf of our colleague, Representative Anna Eshoo of California.

Mr. COSTELLO. Without objection.

[The information follows:]

Statement for the Record of Rep. Anna G. Eshoo
House Energy and Commerce Committee
"Twitter: Transparency and Accountability"
2123 Rayburn House Office Building
September 5th, 2018

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing today, and welcome to Mr. Dorsey.

In 2018, tech platforms like Twitter are the modern public forum – the most equalizing and accessible way that individual citizens can express themselves, engage with the free press, and organize movements in the 21st Century.

As these platforms have matured, serious issues have emerged that are the duty of this Committee to address – among them, freedom of expression, inconsistent and harmful content moderation, foreign disinformation campaigns, and consumer privacy concerns. As Americans grow increasingly reliant on these platforms in their daily lives, it's our job as policymakers to engage in constructive debate about how to protect our fundamental rights in new technological environments. I welcome that debate if that's the one we're here to have.

However, Mr. Chairman, I have to question the motives of the Majority for calling this particular hearing, at this particular time.

This hearing now comes on the heels of a week during which conservative attacks on technology companies have reached a fever pitch. It follows months of what has been dubbed 'Tech Lash' against Silicon Valley by the right.

I'm concerned that Republicans are using this hearing as an opportunity to rally their base and fundraise ahead of an election by fabricating an anti-conservative 'bias' problem where none exists, rather than focusing this Committee's attention on the legitimate issues that these platforms raise.

Let's be clear: the Committee's hearing came at the explicit direction of House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, who according to an article in the Washington Post by Tony Romm (8/28/18), has issued fundraising pitches on social media accusing Silicon Valley of anti-conservative bias.[1]

These same allegations have been trumpeted by conservative commentators and lawmakers alike, including President Trump, who spent time last week, echoing unsubstantiated claims that Google, Facebook, and Twitter are negatively biased against him. His top economic adviser vowed to 'take a look' at how to regulate tech companies to ensure 'fairer' elevation of conservative voices.[2]

This is a dangerous road to go down, even rhetorically. I caution my fellow representatives against suggesting the government would infringe upon the speech rights of private entities,

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[1] Tony Romm, "Trump's economic adviser: 'we're taking a look' at whether Google searches should be regulated," *Washington Post* (August 28, 2018).
[2] *Id.*

whether tech companies or individual citizens. And I would caution the Majority against undermining these platforms for political gain.

Rather than indulging in partisan rabble-rousing, it's my hope that this Committee will use this hearing to redirect our discourse back to the many substantive issues at hand.

In particular, I remain concerned about foreign attempts to use platforms like Twitter to sow mistrust and discord among the American people. We are now a year and a half out from intelligence officials confirming with high confidence that foreign adversaries manipulated our electorate to undermine our democracy through platforms like Twitter and Facebook.

I have consistently raised concerns about what we in Congress are doing to protect our institutions from such attacks in the future. So far, I can think of no steps the Majority has taken… not even a hearing in this Committee, to address the problem of foreign interference.

Twitter has made efforts to tamp down on such activity on its site, but I remain concerned that we are at high risk of history repeating itself. I urge this Committee to prioritize efforts to protect our democracy and our citizens from foreign manipulation and disinformation as soon as possible.

Thank you again to Mr. Dorsey for coming before us today. I look forward to hearing more about Twitter's ongoing efforts to address this and other concerns, and how Congress can be most helpful in those efforts.

Mr. COSTELLO. The gentlelady from Indiana, Mrs. Brooks, is recognized for 4 minutes.

Mrs. BROOKS. Thank you, and thank you, Mr. Dorsey, for being here today and for sitting through an entirely very long day of a lot of questions.

And I want to share with you and stay a little bit on the public safety angle. In 2015, I was very pleased because we got signed into law the Department of Homeland Security Social Media Improvement Act bill and this group has been meeting, which I am pleased that they organized and have been meeting.

They've issued about three different reports and actually one of the reports is focused on highlighting countering false information and disasters and emergencies.

Another one focuses on best practices of incorporating social media into their public safety exercise all the time, and then how do they operationalize social media for public safety.

I would be curious whether or not you and your team, A, if you even knew anything about this group and whether or not you and your team might be willing to assist this group.

While I recognize that you have contacts around the globe, there actually is a public safety social media group that's very focused on this and I think we need to have better interaction between the social media platforms and organizations and the public safety community so they can figure this out.

Is that something you might be willing to consider?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. I was not aware of it, honestly, but I am sure my team is and we'll definitely consider.

Mrs. BROOKS. Thank you.

I am curious, and I asked Mr. Zuckerberg this when he appeared before us—with respect to the terrorism groups and the extremist groups that you monitor and that you take down—and I have seen reports that in a short period of time, July of 2017 to December of 2017, you actually took down 274,460 Twitter accounts in a 6-month period relative to promoting terrorism, and so that seems like a very large number of accounts and I am afraid that people believe that it's not happening. We don't hear about it as much.

Can you—and I understand that you have worked with Google, YouTube, Facebook, and others to create a shared database of prohibited videos and images. But we don't hear anything about that either. Is this database still in use? Are you all still working together and collaborating?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. We are still working together and this is a very active collaboration and a lot of the work we've been doing over the years continues to bear a lot of fruit here.

But we are happy to send to the committee more detailed results. We do have this in our transparency report.

Mrs. BROOKS. And I was going to ask, the transparency report— and you have talked about that a few times—it's not done yet. Is that right?

Mr. DORSEY. It's not finished yet for actions upon content in accounts that have to do with our health aspects. It is for terrorism accounts.

Mrs. BROOKS. It is finished there. All of these questions that you have gotten, and there have been a lot of things, can we expect

that a lot of these things might be in that transparency report that people have been asking you about?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. The first step is to figure out what is most meaningful to put in there. So, really, designing the document so that people can get meaningful insight in terms of how we are doing and what we are seeing and what we are dealing with, and then we need to aggregate all that data.

So we are in the early phases of designing this document and how we are thinking about it. But we'd like to move fast on it because we do believe it will help earn trust.

Mrs. BROOKS. Well, and certainly from a public safety perspective you can't and shouldn't divulge everything that you do relative to helping keep us safe.

And while I appreciate that it is very important to have an open dialogue and to have as much information as possible in the conversation in the public square.

I, certainly, hope that your work with law enforcement—we need to make sure the bad guys don't understand what you're doing to help us.

And so I thank you and look forward to your continued work in this space.

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you so much.

Mrs. BROOKS. Thank you.

Mr. WALDEN [presiding]. The gentlelady's time has expired.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Costello, for 4 minutes.

Mr. COSTELLO. Thank you.

Mr. Dorsey, in your testimony you identified a handful of behavioral signals but you noted Twitter uses thousands of behavioral signals in your behavioral-based ranking models.

Could you provide the committee with a complete accounting of all of these signals?

Mr. DORSEY. A lot of those signals are changing constantly. So even if we present one today it might change within a week or within a month.

The point is that it's not a thousand behavioral signals. It's a thousand decision-making criteria and signals that the algorithms use.

And I don't mean exactly a thousand—it could be hundreds, it could be thousands—they all vary—to actually make decisions.

Mr. COSTELLO. Would you consider providing a more expansive list of signals beyond the small handful that you have provided, specifically those that seem to endure and that don't change week to week?

Mr. DORSEY. We are looking at ways to open up how our algorithms work and what criteria they use to make decisions. We don't have conclusions just yet and the reason why we are pausing a little bit here and considering is because by giving up certain criteria we may be enabling more gaming of the system——

Mr. COSTELLO. Sure.

Mr. DORSEY [continuing]. Taking advantage of the system so that people can bypass our protections.

Mr. COSTELLO. You used the term a little earlier curators. Is that a position within your company or did you just kind of—what's a curator at your company do?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. We have a product within Twitter called Moments and what it is is if you go to the search icon you can see a collection of tweets that are actually arranged by humans, organized around a particular event or a topic. So it might be a supporting game, for example.

And we have curators who are looking for all the tweets that would be relevant and one of the things that they want to ensure is that we are seeing a bunch of different perspectives——

Mr. COSTELLO. Relevant based on my behavior and do I have to manually do that or is that going to show up in my feed?

Mr. DORSEY. We do that work and then sometimes you make it a Moment that is more personalized to you based on your behavior. In some cases, all people get the same Moment.

Mr. COSTELLO. Would that be subject—and, listen, the bias issue—but that would open up consideration for there to be more bias in any way.

Bias can mean a lot of different things. It doesn't even have to be political. So your curators are making some sort of subjective determination on what might be of interest—what might pop more—what might get more retweets, comments, et cetera?

Mr. DORSEY. Well, they use a data-driven approach based on the percentage of conversation that people are seeing. So we are trying to reflect how much this is being talked about on the network, first and foremost, and then checking it against impartiality and also making sure that we are increasing the variety of perspective.

Mr. COSTELLO. I appreciated your written testimony. You said something in there that interests me and that—a lot of things—but one was you have no incentive to remove people from your—in other words, you have no incentive to remove conservatives from your platform because the more people talking the better.

But it strikes me that, when we are talking about hate speech or personal insults or things that are just straight up mean there's an incentive not to remove that stuff if it's driving more participation.

How do you reconcile that?

Mr. DORSEY. It's an excellent question, and something that we have balanced in terms of, number one, our singular objective is to increase the health of this public square and this public space, and we realize that in the short term that will mean removing accounts.

And we do believe that increasing the health of the public conversation on Twitter is a growth vector for us but only in the long term and we—over the past few months we've taken a lot of actions to remove accounts en masse.

We reported this during our past earnings call and the reaction was what it was. But we did that because we believe that, over the long term, these are the right moves so that we can continue to serve a healthy public square.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentleman's time——

Mr. COSTELLO. Yes. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. WALDEN. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Oklahoma, Mr. Mullin, for 4 minutes.

Mr. MULLIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Dorsey, thank you so much for being here.

I've got a question, and this isn't a gotcha question. It's a point to which I want to try to make because as my colleague from Virginia, Mr. Griffith, said earlier, he doesn't believe that you're doing it on purpose.

It's just that the way things are working out the system to which you guys use to figure out who's going to be censored and who's not.

So my question is would you consider yourself conservative? Liberal? Socialist? How would you consider your political views?

Mr. DORSEY. I try to focus on the issues so I don't.

Mr. MULLIN. Well, I know, but the issues are at hand and that's what I am trying to ask.

Mr. DORSEY. What issues in particular?

Mr. MULLIN. Well, OK. Are you a registered voter?

Mr. DORSEY. I am a registered voter.

Mr. MULLIN. Republican? Democrat?

Mr. DORSEY. Independent.

Mr. MULLIN. Independent. So as a business owner myself, different departments that I have seem to take on the personality of the ones that I have running it—the people that I have running a department or a business or an organization.

When I stepped down as CEO of my company, the new CEO took on a different personality and the employees followed. And we are choosing one mindset over another in some way, regardless if you're doing it on purpose or not.

The way that it is being picked, the way it's being portrayed, is somewhat obvious and let me just simply make my point here.

2016 presidential campaign Twitter was accused of suspending an anti-Hillary focused account and de-emphasized popular hashtags. October 2017 Twitter barred Marsha Blackburn's campaign video for an ad platform, calling it inflammatory.

November 2017, a single rogue employee deactivated Trump's account for 11 minutes. That's shocking that a single rogue employee could actually have that much authority to do that.

That's a different question for a different day, maybe. July 2018, Twitter was accused of limiting visibility of certain Republican politicians by preventing their official accounts from appearing in sites—auto-populated drop down searches—search bar results.

August 2018, conservative activist Candace Owens' account was suspended after, essentially, imitating a account from a New York Times editorial board member, Susan—I think I am pronouncing this right—Jeong. Are you familiar with this?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes.

Mr. MULLIN. Let me read what Ms. Jeong wrote: "#cancelwhitepeople. White people marking up the internet with their opinions like dogs pissing on fire hydrants. Are white people genetically predisposed to burn faster in the sun, thus logically being only fit to live underground like grovelling goblins? Oh, man, it's kind of sick how much I enjoy—or, how much joy I get out of being cruel to old white men. I open my mouth to populate—to po-

litely greet a Republican but nothing but an unending cascade of vomiting flows from my mouth."

Now, that same tweet went out by Candace Owens but replaced Jewish for white. Ms. Owens' account was suspended and flagged. The New York Times reporter's account wasn't.

What's the difference?

Mr. DORSEY. So we did make a mistake with Owens——

Mr. MULLIN. But I've heard you say that multiple times we made a mistake. I've heard you say that the whole time you have been up here, and you have been very polite and pretty awesome at doing it.

But the fact is it's bigger than a mistake. It's the environment to which I think Twitter has. My point of the first question was does that fit your political views to which your company is following? Because there seems to be——

Mr. WALDEN. The gentleman's time——

Mr. MULLIN [continuing]. A pattern here.

Mr. DORSEY. No, it doesn't. I value variety in perspective and I value seeing people from all walks of life and all points of views, and we do make errors along the way both in terms of our algorithms and also the people who are following guidelines to review content.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. MULLIN. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. WALDEN. The chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan, Mr. Walberg, for 4 minutes.

Mr. WALBERG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Dorsey, for being here, and it's been a long day for you. It's an important day, though.

I guess the only complaint I would have thus far is that your staff didn't prepare well enough to go through 535 members of Congress to see if there were any biases and have those figures for us today that you could answer.

I would assume that they should have thought that with Republicans and Democrats here and the statements that we've heard from the other side of the aisle that that question would come up—those facts, those statistics—at least on the 535 members.

It would have been worth being able to answer right today with an imperative no, there was no bias, or yes, it appears there was a bias. That's the only complaint I have.

But let me go to the questions. In a July 26th, blog post, Twitter asserted, "We believe the issue had more to do with how other people were interacting with these representatives' accounts.'.

What specific signals or actions of other accounts interacting with the representative's account would you suggest—this is my question—contributed to the auto suggest issue?

Mr. DORSEY. The behaviors we were seeing were actual violations of our terms of service.

Mr. WALBERG. Clear violations of your terms—would muting or blocking another user's account contribute to that?

Mr. DORSEY. No. These were reported violations that we reviewed and found in violation.

Mr. WALBERG. And retweeting or boosting wouldn't be a contribution to what you did either. Does Twitter have policies and

procedures in place to notify accounts or users when their messages or content have been hidden from other users?

Mr. DORSEY. We don't have enough of this so we do have a lot of work to do to help people understand why—right in the products why we might rank or why we might filter or put their content behind an interstitial, and that is an area of improvement. So we haven't done enough work there.

Mr. WALBERG. So while—and I appreciate the fact you don't—you don't want to have users be responsible for contacting you about issues, you ought to be catching some of this stuff.

You have no specific timeline or strong policy in place to notify me, for instance, that there's a reason why you have taken me down, blocked or whatever, for the time being so I can at least respond to that and can make a change so that I am a productive positive member of Twitter.

Mr. DORSEY. Well, if we take any enforcement action that results in removal of content or asking the removal you get notified immediately.

Mr. WALBERG. Immediately?

Mr. DORSEY. It's just a question of the filtering or the time ranking that we don't have a great way of doing this today.

It is our intention to look deeper into this but—and I know this is a frustrating answer but the timelines are a little bit unpredictable. But we do believe that transparency is an important concept for us to push because we want to earn more people's trust.

Mr. WALBERG. With regard to internet service providers, they're required to disclose if they are throttling or blocking their services. Of course, that's been a big issue.

Would you be open to a similar set of transparency rules when you have taken actions that could be viewed as blocking or throttling of content?

Mr. DORSEY. We are considering a transparency report around our actions regarding content like this. We are in the phases right now of understanding what is going to be most useful in designing the document and then to do the engineering work to put it in place we can aggregate all the information.

But I do think it's a good idea and something that I do think helps earn people's trust.

Mr. WALBERG. Well, I wish you well on it because I don't want to be like my colleagues on the other side of the aisle that want to regulate. This is the amazing social media opportunity we have.

We want to keep it going proper. I don't want to see government get involved in regulating if you folks can do the job yourselves.

Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentleman yields back.

The chair recognizes Mr. Duncan for 4 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Dorsey, thank you for being here. We've heard a lot today about content filters, shadow banning, and a little bit about bias, and I would like to focus on bias for just a second.

A member of my staff recently created a test Twitter account working on a communications project unrelated to this topic and even before we knew that this hearing was going to take place.

They were interested to note who was listed on the "suggestions for you to follow" list. This is a pro-life conservative congressional staffer on a work computer whose search history definitely doesn't lean left. All they entered was an email address and a 202 area code phone number.

Yet, here's who Twitter suggested they follow, and you will see it on the screen: Nancy Pelosi, Kamala Harris, John Dingell, Chuck Schumer, John Kerry, Ben Rhodes, David Axelrod, Kirsten Gillibrand, Jim Acosta, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Paul Krugman, Madeline Albright, Claire McCaskill, Chuck Todd, and Jon Lovett—all left leaning political types. That's all she got as "suggested for you to follow.'.

Forget the fact that there aren't any Republicans or conservatives on that list. No singers, no actors, no athletes, no celebrities. She's a 20-something female staffer. Didn't even get Taylor Swift, Chris Pratt, Christiano Ronoldo, or Kim Kardashian. All she got was the suggestions that I had on the screen.

Look, it's one thing not to promote conservatives even though Donald Trump is the—truly, the most successful Twitter user in history of the site. Say what you want about what he tweets but President Trump has utilized Twitter in unprecedented ways to get around the traditional news media.

I would think that someone in your position would be celebrating that and him rather than trying to undermine him. So how do you explain how a female 20-something-year-old who just put in an email address and a 202 area code—why does she only get the liberal suggestions?

Mr. DORSEY. We simply don't have enough information in that case to build up a more informed suggestion for her. So the 202 number is all we have so therefore——

Mr. DUNCAN. So I get that you don't have much information on her. One hundred percent of the suggested followers were biased. Where was Kim Kardashian? Where was Taylor Swift? Where was Ariana Grande.

In fact, I can look at Twitter, most followers, and they're not these people that you suggested for her. There was nothing on her search history on a government work computer to suggest that she was left leaning or right leaning or anything. Katy Perry, number one—she wasn't on this list. How do you explain that?

Mr. DORSEY. I think it was just looking at the 202 as a D.C. number and then taking D.C.-based accounts and the most followed, probably, or most engaged with D.C. accounts. As——

Mr. DUNCAN. In the 202 area code area?

Mr. DORSEY. In the 202 area code.

Mr. DUNCAN. OK. Where's Bryce Harper? Where's Ovechkin? Where are the Capitols? Where are the Nats? Where's D.C. United? Where are the sports teams.

If you're going to use 202 area code and say that's one of the filters, where are those folks outside of the political arena? There are no athletes. There are no singers. There are no celebrities.

There were only suggested political figures of a very liberal persuasion that were suggested for her to follow. Nobody else. That shows bias, sir.

Mr. DORSEY. Well, yes. We do have a lot more work to do in terms of our onboarding and, obviously, you're pointing out some weaknesses in our signals that we use to craft those recommendations.

So if she were to start following or following particular accounts or engaging with particular tweets, that model would completely change, based on those.

We just don't have information. It sounds like we are not being exhaustive enough with the one piece of information we do have, which is her area code.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Dorsey, let me ask you this. After this hearing and me, clearly, showing this bias and a lot of other questions, if someone in a 202 area code that's 28 years old sets up a Twitter account with very limited information but has an email address and a 202 area code——

Mr. WALDEN. Gentleman's time——

Mr. DUNCAN [continuing]. Are you going to tell me today that they're going to get other suggested followers than the liberals that I mentioned?

Mr. DORSEY. That is not a good outcome for us.

Mr. WALDEN. Gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Mr. WALDEN. The chair recognizes the gentlelady from California, Mrs. Walters, for 4 minutes.

Mrs. WALTERS. Thank you, Mr. Dorsey, for being here.

News reports indicate that Periscope—as you know, is Twitter's live video feed app—is being used to sexually exploit children. These reports detail the targeting of children as young as 9 years old.

At times, coordinated activity for multiple users is employed to persuade children to engage in sexual behavior. These videos can be live streamed in public or private broadcasts on Periscope.

I recognize that a live video app like Periscope creates challenges, especially when attempting to monitor content in real time.

Yet, your testimony discussing malicious election-related activity on Twitter reads, "We strongly believe that any such activity on Twitter is unacceptable."

I hope that standard of unacceptability is similarly applied to sexual exploitation of children on Periscope, and I would expect that it is, considering that Twitter has stated zero tolerance policy for child sexual exploitation.

So my questions are does Twitter primarily rely on users to report sexually inappropriate content or content concerning child safety?

Mr. DORSEY. We do have some dependency on reports. But this is an area that we want to move much faster in automating and not, obviously, placing the blame—or not placing the work on the victim and making sure that we are recognizing these in real time, and we have made some progress with Periscope.

Mrs. WALTERS. So what is the average length of a live video on Periscope?

Mr. DORSEY. I am not aware of that right now. But we can follow up.

Mrs. WALTERS. OK. And what is the average response time to re-move a live video on Periscope that is deemed to violate Twitter's term of service?

Mr. DORSEY. It depends entirely on the severity of the report and what the context is. So we try to prioritize by severity. So threats of death or suicidal tendencies would get a higher priority than ev-erything else.

Mrs. WALTERS. So just out of curiosity, when you say we try to eliminate and we have a higher priority, like, who makes that deci-sion?

Mr. DORSEY. So when people report any violations of our terms of service, we have algorithms looking at the report and then trying to understand how to prioritize those reports so they're seen by hu-mans much faster.

Mrs. WALTERS. OK. So I would assume that you don't believe that you use the reporting as an effective method for monitoring live videos on Periscope then?

Mr. DORSEY. Not over the long term.

Mrs. WALTERS. Well, obviously, this is a really, really important issue. Is user reporting an effective method for monitoring private broadcasts on Periscope?

Mr. DORSEY. Also not over the long term. But that is something that we need to do much more work around in terms of automating these.

Mrs. WALTERS. So can you indicate that you need to do some more work around this? Do you have any timeframe of when you think you will be able to get this handled?

Mr. DORSEY. We'd like to work as quickly as possible and make sure that we are prioritizing the proactive approaches of our en-forcement and, again, it does go down that prioritization stack. But we intend to move as quickly as we can. I know that it's frustrating not to hear a particular time frame. But we are moving fast.

Mrs. WALTERS. Can you explain the type of technology that you're using in order to change this?

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. We'll be utilizing a lot of machine learning and deep learning in order to look at all of our systems at scale and then also prioritize the right review cadence.

Mrs. WALTERS. OK. I yield back the balance of my time. Thank you.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentlelady yields back.

The chair recognizes Mr. Carter, Georgia, our last member to participate—thank you—for 4 minutes.

Mr. CARTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Dorsey, con-gratulations. I am the last one.

Mr. Dorsey, in preparation for this hearing, I sent out a notice throughout my district and I asked them—I let them know that we were having this hearing and I was going to be asking questions and I said, what do you think I ought to ask him.

So I got back some pretty interesting responses for that and one of them came from a teenage high school student—a conservative teenage high school student down in Camden County. That's right on the Georgia/Florida state line.

And he said, I am a conservative teenage high school student and I am on Twitter and I've got over 40,000 followers, yet this

young man had tried five times to get verification and yet he's been turned down all five times.

And his question to me was, I've got friends who are more liberal than me who've got less followers than me and yet they've been verified. Why is that? What should I tell him?

Mr. DORSEY. First and foremost, we believe we need a complete reboot of our verification system. It's not serving us. It's not serving the people that we serve, well. It really depends on when his friends were verified.

We had an open verification system not too long ago that looked for various criteria and we verified people based on that. And it's not a function of how many followers you have. We have some verified folks who only have 5,000 followers. We——

Mr. CARTER. That was his point. He had 40,000. He couldn't— and he doesn't understand. I don't know what to tell him.

Mr. DORSEY. Yes.

Mr. CARTER. It seems to me like he would have been verified and from what he explained to me and to staff is that they were—they applied at the same time.

Mr. DORSEY. Yes. It——

Mr. CARTER. So why was he denied and they were approved?

Mr. DORSEY. I would need to understand his particular case. So I would want to know his name and we can follow up——

Mr. CARTER. We will get you that information because I would like to give the young man an explanation. OK. I think he deserves it.

Mr. DORSEY. OK.

Mr. CARTER. All right. And let me ask you something, and I apologize, but being the last one sometimes you're a little bit redundant.

But you were asked earlier because this committee and particularly the Health Subcommittee has been the tip of the spear, if you will, with the opioid crisis that we have in our country.

As you're aware, we are losing 115 people every day to opioid addiction, and we just talked about the algorithms and you have been talking about it all day about and why is it that we haven't been able to get these sites off?

What's missing? What are you identifying that you're missing not to be able to get these tweets off?

Mr. DORSEY. I think it's more of a new behavior and a new approach. It's——

Mr. CARTER. This has been going on quite a while.

Mr. DORSEY. It's certainly not an excuse. We need to look at these more deeply in terms of how our algorithms are automatically determining when we see this sort of activity and taking action much faster.

Mr. CARTER. OK. Fair enough.

My last question is this, and I want to talk about intellectual property, particularly as it relates to live streaming.

Now, you have been here all day. You were over at the Senate this morning and you have been here this afternoon, and all day long, you have been saying—and we have no other reason but to believe you—yes, we need to work on this—we are going to work on this.

The piracy that takes place with live streaming movies and intellectual property like that, that's been going on for quite a while, hasn't it?

Mr. DORSEY. It has.

Mr. CARTER. Why should I believe you—and we had another CEO of another social media that was here a couple of months ago—same thing—we are working on it—we are going to get it done.

But yet, this is something that's been going on. You ain't got it done yet. Why should I believe you now? And I say that because, Dr. Bucshon, Representative Walberg—I echo their comments—I don't want the Federal Government to get into this business. I don't want to regulate you guys. I think it'll stifle innovation.

But why should I believe you if you hadn't got this fixed?

Mr. DORSEY. Well, the reason we have to still work on it is because the methods of attack constantly change, and we'll never arrive at one solution that fixes everything. We need to constantly iterate based on new vectors of stealing IP or rebroadcasting IP, for instance, because they're constantly changing and we just need to be 10 steps ahead of that.

Mr. CARTER. I want to believe you and I am going to believe you. But I just have to tell you, I hope you believe me—we don't want the federal—and you don't want the Federal Government to be in this.

I think the success of the internet and of your products has been because the Federal Government stayed out of it. But we got to have help. We have to have a commitment, and when I look at this I think, why would I believe him if they've been working on this and hadn't even got it fixed yet.

Mr. DORSEY. Absolutely.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentleman's time——

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Chairman, thank you, and I yield.

Mr. DORSEY. Thank you.

Mr. WALDEN. Thank you.

And while we've been sitting here, I am told that Twitter has deleted the account that was trying to sell drugs online. So your team has been at work. We appreciate that.

We have exhausted probably you and your team and our members questions for now. We do have some letters and questions for the—for the record—concluding script.

And so I, again, want to thank you for being here before the committee. Some of our members didn't get to all their questions and so we will be submitting those for the record, and we have a number of things we'd like to insert in the record by unanimous consent: a letter from INCOMPAS, Consumer Technology Association, and the Internet Association; an article from Gizmodo; an article from Inc.; a paper by Kate Klonick *; an article from NBC; an article from Slate; and an article from The Verge.

[The information appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. WALDEN. Pursuant to committee rules, I remind members they have 10 business days to submit additional questions for the

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* The information has been retained in committee files and can be found at: https:// docs.house.gov/meetings/IF/IF00/20180905/108642/HHRG-115-IF00-20180905-SD011.pdf.

record. I ask the witness to submit their response within 10 business days upon receipt of that question.

We ask you remain seated until the Twitter team is able to exit. So if you all would remain seated—thank you—then our folks from Twitter can leave and, Mr. Dorsey, thank you again for being before the Energy and Commerce Committee.

And with that, the subcommittee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 5:43 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

[Material submitted for inclusion in the record follows:]

Kevin McCarthy
@GOPLeader

Following

Conservatives will not be silenced on social media. We must stand up to Big Tech. #StoptheBias

11:57 AM - 30 Jul 2018

1,724 Retweets **5,110** Likes

475   1.7K   5.1K

95

Document for the Record – Rep. Devin Nunes Fox Interview – Rep. Doyle

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pu0JFgINa2w

Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump

Following

Twitter "SHADOW BANNING" prominent Republicans. Not good. We will look into this discriminatory and illegal practice at once! Many complaints.

7:46 AM - 26 Jul 2018

50,084 Retweets   **159,368** Likes

| 38K | 50K | 159K |

recode

POLICY   TWITTER   POLITICS

Twitter admits there were many more Russian trolls on its site during the 2016 U.S. presidential election

Congress isn't going to be happy.

By Tony Romm | @TonyRomm | Jan 19, 2018, 5:34pm EST
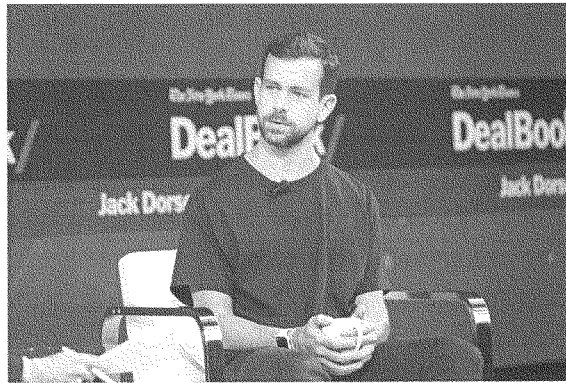
Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey | Michael Cohen/Getty Images for The New York Times

Twitter revealed on Friday that trolls tied to the Russian government spread far more disinformation during the 2016 U.S. presidential election than the company first reported — and it pledged to notify hundreds of thousands of users who had seen that content.

The update comes as Twitter continues to face criticism on Capitol Hill that it has failed to fully confront the scourge of Kremlin propaganda — and neglected to respond to the earlier demands of lawmakers who are probing Russia's meddling on popular social media sites.

Ahead of a series of congressional hearings last year, Twitter initially said it had discovered 2,200 accounts tied to the Internet Research Agency, a troll army connected to the Russian government. On Friday, though, Twitter said it had actually identified 3,814 accounts related to the IRA.

Also last year, Twitter calculated that there were roughly 36,000 bots originating out of Russia — and tweeting about the election — as Americans headed to the ballot box. By Friday, though, Twitter said it had found an additional 13,000 bots, bringing the total tally of automated accounts tweeting about the presidential race to more than 50,000.

And Twitter revealed for the first time on Friday that Russian propaganda — content that sought to stir social and political unrest in the United States — reached scores of its users. The company said it would notify 677,000 people in the United States who had followed one of these suspect accounts, or retweeted or liked their content. Twitter said it would do so by email.

In announcing its findings, Twitter sought to stress that Russian disinformation only amounted to a small portion of the tweets shared regularly on its platform. And it reiterated that it had taken steps to prevent such abuse as another election — a 2018 race to determine the composition of Congress — fast approaches. That includes a series of previously announced changes to the way it displays political ads.

But the news is sure to infuriate some federal lawmakers, who repeatedly have needled Twitter during the course of their investigation into Russian influence.

Democratic Sen. Mark Warner, for one, blasted Twitter in September for a "deeply disappointing" response to his questions about the election. When the company later appeared with its tech peers, Facebook and Google, at a series of congressional hearings on the issue, lawmakers from both parties demanded that Twitter take more aggressive steps to prevent such manipulation of its platform in the future.

This year, the company completely blew a deadline by which it was supposed to respond to written questions it was sent by congressional investigators. And for months, Twitter had ignored public demands by lawmakers like Sen. Richard

Blumenthal that it notify users who had seen or interacted with such Russian propaganda. Only this week did Twitter finally acknowledge that it would take that step.

Warner, for his part, still offered some limited praise late Friday:

Mark Warner
@MarkWarner

I've been tough with Twitter on this, but I'm encouraged to see the company beginning to take responsibility and notify its users of Russia's influence campaign on its platform.

Reuters Politics   @ReutersPolitics
MORE: Twitter says it is emailing notifications for 677,775 people in U.S. who followed one of the accounts linked to Russia's Internet Research Agency during election. twitter.com/ReutersPolitic...

7:06 PM - Jan 19, 2018

1,013   434 people are talking about this

Blumenthal, meanwhile, cheered Twitter's belated decision to notify users who had seen content generated by Russian trolls. But the Democratic senator still said he'd keep watch to ensure that Twitter actually adopts "measures to implement safeguards to protect users from the ongoing and real-time influence of Russian bots."

Nevertheless, Twitter announced its latest findings at a busy moment: The company published its blog post at 5 pm on a Friday, while the U.S. Congress barreled at the time toward a potential government shutdown.

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Twitter has suspended more than 1.2 million terrorism-related accounts since late 2015

Kurt Wagner
Published 10:24 AM ET Thu, 5 April 2018

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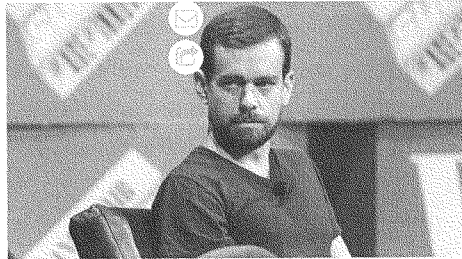
Getty Images

Jack Dorsey, CEO, Twitter

Twitter suspended more than 1.1 million accounts that were promoting terrorism over a two year stretch, the company announced Thursday, including more than 274,000 accounts in the last six months of 2017.

It's not really the kind of "1 million user" milestone anyone likes to celebrate. On one hand, it's good to know that Twitter is finding and

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accounts to begin with — and concerning they keep targeting Twitter as a place to spread their messages.

Read more from Recode:

YouTube vowed to increase security after the attack — but that's a tough task on tech campuses

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Facebook will stop sharing as much of your personal data iwth people outside of Facebook

The silver lining here is that the number of accounts Twitter removed in the back half of 2017 was down more than 27 percent from the last six months of 2016. Twitter says that's because it's getting better at dissuading people from creating them to begin with.

"We continue to see the positive, significant impact of years of hard work making our site an undesirable place for those seeking to promote terrorism, resulting in this type of activity increasingly shifting away from Twitter," the company wrote in a blog post.

Kurt Wagner
Senior Editor Social Media, Re/code

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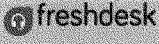
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Facebook and Twitter remove hundreds of accounts linked to Iranian and Russian political meddling

Devin Coldewey
@techcrunch / Aug 21, 2018

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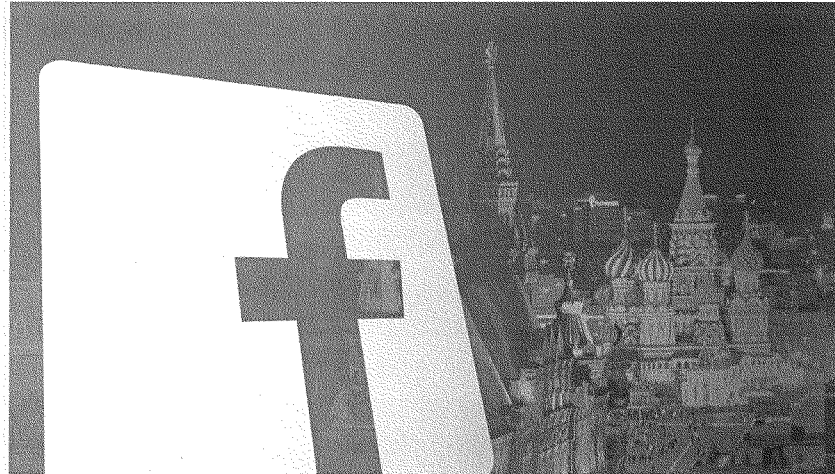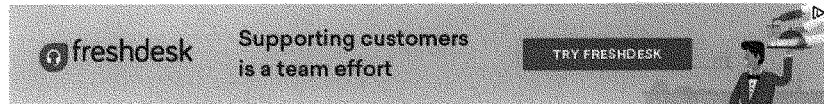
with the help of security firm FireEye. The latter provided its own initial analysis, with more to come.

Notably, few or none of these were focused on manipulating the 2018 midterm elections here in the States, but rather had a variety of topics and apparent goals. The common theme is certainly attempting to sway political opinion — just not in Ohio.

For instance, a page may purport to be an organization trying to raise awareness about violence perpetrated by immigrants, but is in fact operated by a larger shadowy group attempting to steer public opinion on the topic. The networks seem to originate in Iran, and were promoting narratives including "anti-Saudi, anti-Israeli, and pro-Palestinian themes, as well as support for specific U.S. policies favorable to Iran," as FireEye describes them.
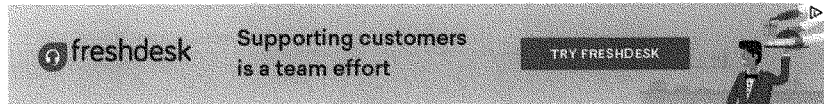
The first network Facebook describes, "Liberty Front Press," comprised 74 pages, 70 accounts and 3 groups on Facebook, and 76 accounts on Instagram. Some 155,000 people followed at least one piece of the Facebook network and they had 48,000 Instagram followers. They were generally promoting political views in the Middle East and only recently expanded to the States; they spent $6,000 on ads beginning in January 2015 up until this month.

A related network to this one also engaged in cyberattacks and hacking attempts. Its 12 pages and 66 accounts, plus nine on Instagram, were posing as news organizations.

A third network had accounts going back to 2011; it was sharing content in the Middle East as well, about local, U.S. and U.K. political issues. With 168 pages, 140 Facebook accounts and 31 Instagram accounts, this was a big one. As you'll recall, the big takedown of Russia's IRA accounts only amounted to 135. (The full operation was of course much larger than that.)

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Interestingly this network also hosted 25 events, meaning it was not just a bunch of people in dark rooms posting under multiple pseudonyms and fake accounts. People attended real-life events for these pages, suggesting the accounts supported real communities despite being sockpuppets for some other organization.

Twitter, almost immediately after Facebook's post, announced that it had banned 284 accounts for "coordinated manipulation" originating in Iran.

Twitter Safety
@TwitterSafety

Working with our industry peers today, we have suspended 284 accounts from Twitter for engaging in coordinated manipulation. Based on our existing analysis, it appears many of these accounts originated from Iran.
8:01 PM - Aug 21, 2018
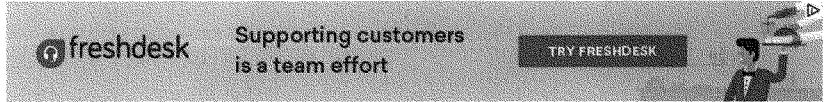
3,786   2,515 people are talking about this

The Iranian networks were not alleged to be necessarily the product of state-backed operations, but of course the implication is there and not at all unreasonable. But Facebook also announced that it was removing pages and accounts "linked to sources the U.S. government has previously identified as Russian military intelligence services."

The number and nature of *these* accounts is not gone into in detail, except to say that their activity was focused more on Syrian and Ukrainian political issues. "To date, we have not found activity by the accounts targeting the U.S.," the post reads. But at least the origin is relatively clear: Russian state actors.

This should be a warning that it isn't just the U.S. that is the target of coordinated disinformation campaigns online — wherever one country has something to gain by

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now following the Kremlin's playbook from 2016. While I'm encouraged to see Facebook taking steps to rid their platforms of these bad actors, there's clearly more work to be done."

He said he plans to bring this up at the Senate Intelligence Committee's grilling of Facebook, Twitter and Google leadership on September 5th.

📷 **Image Credits:** Bryce Durbin / TechCrunch

Add a Comment
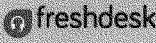
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russia   Twitter [cb]

Benchmark and Tiger double down on going public
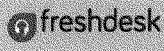
10 minutes ago   Danny Crichton

The JBL Eon One Pro is a powered sound system for speakers and performers

27 minutes ago   John Biggs

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Uber, One Year Later with Dara Khosrowshahi (Uber) | Disrupt SF 2018

36 minutes ago   TC Video

Dating app Bumble says buzz off to Facebook, plans Hive space expansion next year

43 minutes ago   Ingrid Lunden, Sarah Perez

ProtonMail names one of the attackers behind a major DDoS this summer

43 minutes ago   Natasha Lomas
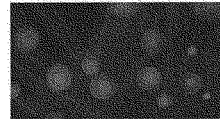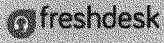
British Airways customer data stolen in data breach

1 hour ago   Zack Whittaker

GreyOrange raises $140M to develop fully-automated robotics for warehouses

1 hour ago   Jon Russell

111

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1 hour ago   **Jonathan Shieber**

Uber makes it easier to switch between rides, scooters, bikes and car rentals

1 hour ago   **Megan Rose Dickey**
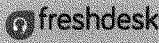
PagerDuty raises $90M to wake up more engineers in the middle of the night

1 hour ago   **Frederic Lardinois**
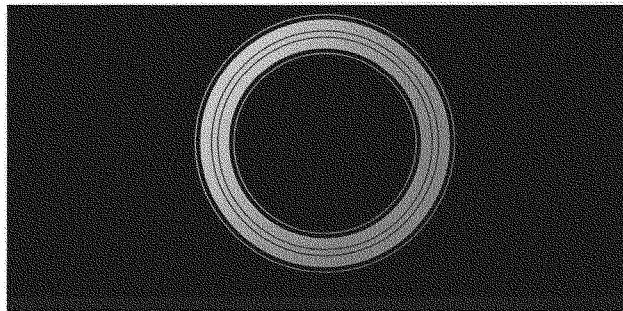
What to expect from next week's big iPhone event

1 hour ago   **Brian Heater**

2 hours ago   **Kate Clark**

Instagram launches parent portal to teach internet safety

2 hours ago   **Sarah Wells**

Bumble launches Snooze button to pause dating for a digital detox

2 hours ago   **Josh Constine**

Fertility startup Future Family switches to a subscription platform

2 hours ago   **Sarah Buhr**

Ford gives the first peek at its Mustang-inspired electric crossover

2 hours ago   **Kirsten Korosec**
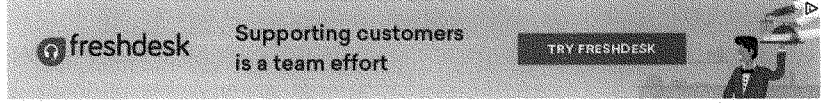
Tesla's new bug bounty protects hackers — and your warranty

2 hours ago   **Zack Whittaker**

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Facebook and Twitter remove hundreds of accounts linked to Iranian and Russian political meddling | TechCrunch

2 hours ago **Brian Heater**

US Treasury sanctions North Korea over Sony hack and WannaCry attack

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INC⊛MPAS
THE FUTURE OF COMPETITION

Consumer Technology Association

Internet Association

September 4, 2018

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
House Energy & Commerce Committee
2185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
House Energy & Commerce Committee
237 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Committee Hearing – Twitter: Transparency and Accountability

Dear Representatives Walden and Pallone:

As conservatives and the leaders of major associations that represent the technology industry, we write to you to express our concerns about congressional leaders embracing the notion of political bias on various social media platforms and websites. We strongly reject this notion. These accusations are not borne out by data and facts, and they have been widely discredited by major news organizations and experts.

The idea of Conservative – or Progressive – bias on these platforms is simply not true. The platforms themselves don't have a political ideology and it would make no business sense for companies to stifle the speech of half their customers. Conservative voices thrive on social media, which has allowed new ideas, once outside the mainstream, to rise to the top. Compared to any other form of communication, internet companies offer the most open and accessible platforms for all Americans.

The technology sector is a made-in-America economic success story. It is the envy of the world, boasts a large trade surplus, and employs millions of Americans. Internet companies enable competition and innovation from American start-ups and small businesses that can access customers across the globe at the click of a mouse. Over 40 percent of the world's unicorn companies – privately held start-ups valued at over $1 billion – were born in the United States. Internet companies have been vital to unleashing innovation and driving economic growth.

As we've seen on both sides of the aisle, as well as in apolitical spaces, social media platforms function as crucial organizing tools. They have been effective in serving the public during tragedy. For example, in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, Texans used Twitter and Facebook to spread important safety information and direct First Responders to citizens in need of aid.

America faces mounting threats on a wide variety of technological fronts from our geopolitical rivals – Russia, China, and as was recently reported Iran. These are serious issues that will only mount in the coming decades. That should be our primary focus, as it is critical to both our national security and the future of our democracy. We urge you to focus on these vital issues and see no legitimate avenue for a legislative response on political bias.

Thank you for taking the time to hear our concerns.

Sincerely,

/s/Chip Pickering
Chip Pickering, CEO
INCOMPAS

/s/Gary Shapiro
Gary Shapiro, President and CEO
Consumer Technology Association

/s/Michael Beckerman
Michael Beckerman, President and CEO
Internet Association

Users Looking for Child Pornography Are Gathering on Periscope, Twitter's Forgotten Video Service

VIDEO   REVIEW   SCIENCE   IO9   FIELD GUIDE   EARTHER   DESIGN   PALEOFUTURE
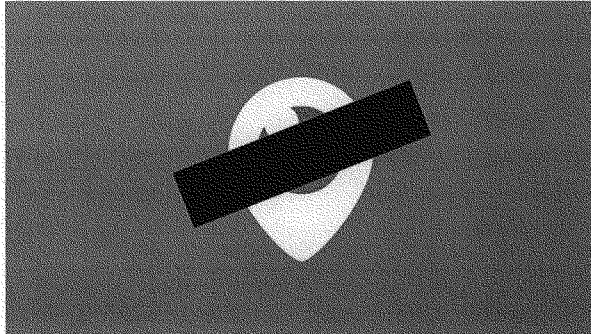
Bryan Menegus
12/15/17 9:30am ·

Image: Jim Cooke/Gizmodo

As 2017 wheezes to its merciful end and the social media titans reckon with
growing backlash, Twitter's largely forgotten video streaming app Periscope
has gained an insidious second life as a hub for seekers of child pornography.
Gizmodo's search of the platform over the course of a single afternoon
uncovered dozens of accounts—50 in total—which appeared to be soliciting
sexualized images of minors, or in the worst cases, depicting it themselves.

Acquired by Twitter before launch to compete with a similar app named
Meerkat, Periscope allows users to broadcast live videos—such as on-the-
ground views of newsworthy events—which can then be shared and rewatched
at a later date. Seamless integration with Twitter helped it debut in 2015 as one
of the top 25 app downloads, according to analytics service App Annie. Though
it's better off than Meerkat, which shuttered late last year, Periscope has
plummeted to the 968th most downloaded app as of December 12th.

The presence of bad actors using a derelict platform to traffic in child
pornography is almost less surprising than the brazenness of their methods in
doing so. 22 of the users spotted by Gizmodo opted for names which did little
to hide their intent, with handles like "lovechildrin," "girlpreteen," or
"addmegroupsCPplease." (CP—sometimes further obfuscated as "cheese
pizza"—is a well-worn shorthand for "child pornography".) Slightly subtler
accounts merely included bios like "Love Little Girls the younger the better" or
"j'aime les jeune filles" (which means exactly what you think it does.)

Though Periscope claims to have "zero tolerance for any form of child sexual exploitation," the images used as avatars by some users tell another story. Of the 50 accounts found by Gizmodo, nine displayed the genitalia of prepubescent girls, and six more depicted sexual penetration featuring what appeared to be minors.
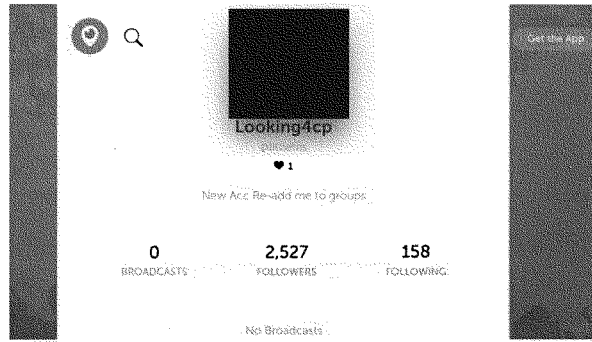

Image: Periscope

Many users that seem to reference a desire to share or view child pornography use their accounts' bio section to ask for admission to private groups—a feature on Periscope where, as the name suggests, sets of users can broadcast only to each other—which explains why the profiles of these users, some of which claimed over 4,000 followers, all displayed a broadcast count of zero. The same is true of adult porn streamers who sometimes amass followings in excess of 100,000 despite sexual acts, legal or illegal, being explicitly prohibited by Periscope's content guidelines, and whose videos are often recorded and reuploaded to forums like Reddit's r/Open_Boobs. The most upvoted post in that community (which is dedicated to "info/media on Periscope chicks") is titled "DO NOT FUCKING POST UNDERAGE GIRLS IN HERE."

Though not counted towards broadcast numbers, private videos can be rewatched later in the same way that public videos can be on Periscope, unless they are deleted at some point after the broadcast ends. If deleted, Periscope declined to quantify how long content is stored on Periscope's servers. (Gizmodo, it should be said, did not join or attempt to join such private groups for obvious legal reasons and can't state conclusively that pornography featuring minors is being shared within them. We did, however, attempt to contact users among the 50 accounts who provided an email address, though none replied to a request for comment.)

Coexisting on Periscope alongside these users are, worryingly, accounts operated by actual children. Though the platform's user discovery tools are limited, several of these accounts followed users whose broadcasts featured or consisted solely of innocent broadcasts of young children involved in everyday activities. As Slate reported recently, predators have been known to leverage the app's live chat functions to encourage underage users to perform sexually exploitative acts like removing their clothing during a broadcast.

Periscope added minimal functionality last year that allows chat comments to be flagged as spam or abuse, but that system relies on other users in the chat to verify a comment is harmful. No option of any kind exists to flag accounts as violating platform guidelines—or US law, for that matter. If such an option existed, it isn't clear who would even handle the reports. A LinkedIn search for Periscope turned up no employees whose job title reflected user safety or content moderation.

A Twitter spokesperson told Gizmodo that "when a broadcast is reported, it is reviewed by a member of our teams who are available 24/7," but declined to specify what "teams" existed and how many people comprised them. A Periscope post from late November addressing the sexual exploitation of children on the platform refers only to content moderation by a "committed team," singular.

Gizmodo alerted Twitter to ongoing issues with child exploitation on Periscope, providing a series of questions as well as a list of accounts seemingly seeking child pornography, all but one of which have since been banned. Their response is reproduced below:

> Thanks for reaching out. We recently shared an update on our safety efforts here.
>
> All content on Periscope must follow the community guidelines. Anyone can report a live or replay broadcast; this article has more details on how to report a broadcast. When a broadcast is reported, it is reviewed by a member of our teams who are available 24/7.
>
> We do not have additional numbers to share regarding the app or our team, but happy to help with any other questions you may have.

Real-time communication presents extraordinary challenges for user safety: Attempts by Twitter, Periscope's parent company, to curb extremism have been underwhelming at best, and chat client Discord had its own child pornography scandal earlier this year. For towering fuckups in live video moderation, look no further than Facebook's rash of user-generated crime and suicide broadcasts. Simply by design, Periscope has to contend with the worst problems of both chatrooms and live video. With Twitter increasingly investing in its own parallel video product, Periscope may be too expensive to repair, but just unpopular enough to quietly dismantle without embarrassment.

RECOMMENDED STORIES

Discord Has a Child Porn Problem [Updated]

Four Charged For Facebook Live Torture of Mentally Ill Man [UPDATED]

Facebook Will Add 3,000 More People to Watch Murders and Suicides

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bryan Menegus

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TECHNOLOGY

Twitter's Comeback Shows the Path for Traditional Media Companies
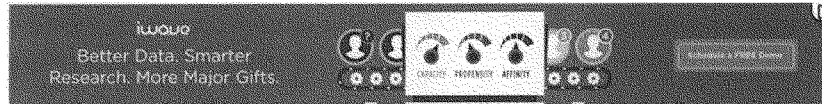
Traditional media giants misidentified the effect as the cause. Lack of scale isn't the problem -- it's a symptom of the weakness in their underlying business models. Twitter's turnaround shows them the real recipe for success.
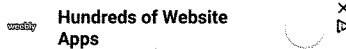
in f 𝕐

By Alex Moazed *Founder and CEO, Applico* 𝕐 **@AlexMoazed**

CREDIT: Getty Images

(This is a guest post from Applico Head of Platform and Modern Monopolies co-author Nick Johnson.)

Twitter is back, bigly.

Hundreds of Website Apps   ✕
                                                             ▷

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After years of poor financial results and a languishing stock price, Twitter is finally growing again. Twitter's user numbers were up 8 million year-over-year to 336 million monthly active users in the first quarter of this year. That's stark turnaround for a company that was actually *losing* users just a few years ago.

How has Twitter done it? There are a combination of factors, including major product changes and redesigns. The U.S. President's continued use of the platform as his press briefing room also helps. But a significant part of Twitter's resurgence has been its pivot to news and premium content.

As we wrote in *Modern Monopolies*, for a long time Twitter suffered from an identity crisis. It couldn't decide if it was a content platform or a social network. One direction staked out a new territory for Twitter to focus on while the other cast Twitter as a direct competitor to Facebook, which it never really was. Under Jack Dorsey, Twitter's leadership finally resolved this conflict and focused on building Twitter as a content platform. Notably, in April 2016 Twitter moved itself out of the "Social Networking" category on the App Store and into the "News" section.

With that shift, Twitter also began focusing aggressively on professional content to complement its user-generated content. The pivot to News coincided with a $10 million deal with the NFL for Thursday Night Football games in April 2016. That partnership has since ended as Amazon bid up the rights to $50 million, but in the wake of its success Twitter has expanded its premium content in a big way. Next, Twitter went all-in on political coverage during the 2016 U.S. election season, live streaming the president debates and the inauguration.

Former Twitter COO Anthony Noto publicly noted that the company's goal was "24/7 video content on Twitter," including topics as broad as politics to ones as niche as professional dart leagues. "There's almost 300,000 followers for some of the professional dart leagues," Noto said. "We can serve that audience just as well as we can Boston Red Sox fans."

This spring, Twitter announce 30 new video deals with major content providers including ESPN and Disney, NBC, Viacom and Vice Media. It also expanded existing deals with Major League Baseball and Major League Soccer.

Combining UGC and Premium Content

Advertisers have begun to flock to Twitter's mix of user-generated content and premium content. For advertisers, this combination offers the best of both worlds. The platform content creates the scale of eyeballs and data that advertisers demand while the premium, linear content offer high-quality, ad-friendly inventory that brands want to associate with.

This strategy has been a boon for Twitter. Today, video accounts for more than half of the company's ad revenue, and the success of premium video ads have been a driving force behind Twitter's revenue resurgence. While revenue shrunk in the first quarter of 2017, in the first quarter of this year revenue was up 21 percent. And, importantly, Twitter is now profitable for the first time ever. It has posted two consecutive quarters with positive earnings and it is projecting a profitable year for 2018.

With its premium video strategy, Twitter has firmly reestablished itself as a viable third option for advertisers looking to diversify their spending away from Facebook and Google, as many increasingly are. With both revenue and user growth rebounding, investors have started to take a second look at Twitter's stock. Today, a stock that once bottomed out at just above $14 a little more than a year ago has been hovering around $46.

For media companies that are struggling with the slow but steady decline of TV advertising and subscription revenue, Twitter shows the path to success. Twitter's combination of user-generated content and premium content is exactly the model that the major media companies should be looking to replicate.

Instead, most have been looking to replicate the Netflix subscription model, but this is a loser's game that involves spending billions on content with little long-term defensibility. While Netflix claims paper profits, it only does so by hiding billions in content spend outside of its income statement. The company is bleeding cash and there's no end in sight.

Twitter Shows Media Companies How to Compete with Tech Platforms

In contrast, Twitter's strategy shows much greater promise. Yes, its content deals are still expensive. But it derisks those investments with a unique and defensible network of user-generated content. This combined platform and linear approach is a winning recipe in media, yet it's one that few major media companies have chosen to pursue.

Instead, we're seeing a rush of mega-mergers as incumbents look to double down on their existing models. This strategy may work in the short term, but it won't stall the long-term shift away from traditional media models and towards platform businesses. It also won't provide traditional content providers with the scale they need to profitably compete with modern monopolies like Facebook and Google.

Unfortunately, these traditional media giants have misidentified the effect as the cause. They view lack of scale as the problem, when really it's just a symptom of their underlying business models. Rather than acquiring more and more linear content providers, these companies should be looking to embrace the platform model that drives the success of their biggest competitors.

These media companies have a treasure trove of premium content, and Twitter has shown them how best to capitalize on it. Leveraging those premium assets to provide the basis for a network of user-generated content is a clear recipe for success. Scale *is* their path to competing with Facebook and Google. But it's the business model, and not their balance sheets, that will get them there.

PUBLISHED ON: JUN 25, 2018

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Twitter CEO Dorsey Gets Backlash For Eating at Chick-fil-A

By NBC Bay Area staff
Published at 11:02 PM PDT on Jun 10, 2018 | Updated at 9:55 PM PDT on Jun 10, 2018
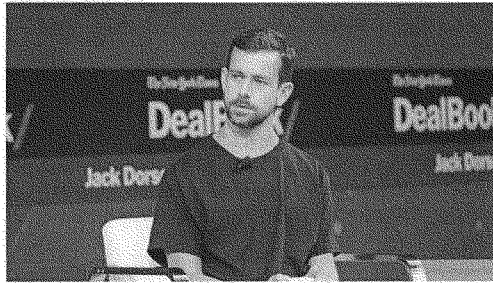
Jack Dorsey speaks during The New York Times 2017 DealBook Conference at Jazz at Lincoln Center on November 9, 2017 in New York City. (Photo by Michael Cohen/Getty Images for The New York Times)

Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey received some harsh backlash Sunday for tweeting about his stop at a Chick-fil-A restaurant in Los Angeles.

Dorsey posted a screen shot of his use of the fast food restaurant's mobile app, seemingly boasting about a 10 percent discount he received with his purchase.

- **Aretha's Lack of a Will Could Make Things Rocky for Heirs**

Members of the LGBTQ community, the media and other liberals immediately called him out for patronizing the chain, whose CEO Dan Cathy is a known critic of gay marriage.

And the critics weren't so subtle in mentioning Dorsey's flub came during Pride month.

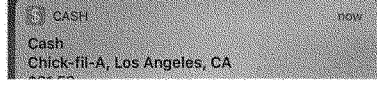- **Bill Could Limit Early School Start Times in California**

After the backlash, Dorsey expressed regret for eating at Chick-fil-A, responding to Soledad O'Brien by saying, "You're right. Completely forgot about their background."

WATCH LIVE   Today
Comic Jon Stewart, actor John Krasinski, writer

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2   [VIDEO] Plane Quarantined at JFK After 100 Report Feeling Ill

3   [VIDEO] 2 Priests Arrested for Sex Acts in Car in Miami Beach

4   [VIDEO] Man Accused of Molesting Children in Santa Ana Laundromat

125

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Your 10% Boost at Chick-fil-A was applied!
You were charged $28.43

CASH   now

Cash
Chick-fil-A, Los Angeles, CA

jack
@jack

Boost @ChickfilA
2,328   8:44 PM - Jun 9, 2018

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Radar   Forecast   Maps

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Quiz: Amazon just became the 2nd American company with a $1 trillion valuation. Which American company was the first?

○ Tesla

○ Apple

○ Google

○ Facebook

○ No idea

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Periscope Has a Minor Problem

Users are swarming young girls and asking them to do inappropriate things. And the live-streaming app hasn't been able to stop them.

By April Glaser

Photo illustration by Lisa Larson-Walker. Photo by Clem Onojeghuo/Unsplash.

very social media network has its underbelly, and the one on Periscope, Twitter's live-video app, might be uglier than most: On any given day, users appear to flock to broadcasts from minors and encourage them to engage in sexual and inappropriate behavior. Worried Periscope users have been **ringing the alarm for more than a year**, and Twitter has reaffirmed its zero-tolerance policy against child exploitation after reporters have followed up. But if the company has been working any harder to enforce that policy, its efforts don't appear to have scrubbed out the grime.

Last month, a tipster described to me how some Periscope users were routinely pursuing children who had logged on to the platform to play games like truth or dare with others. It took pseudonym-cloaked commenters less than six minutes to persuade a girl, broadcasting with a friend and playing truth or dare on a public forum recently, to lift her shirt and show her breast. "Fully out," typed one user, right before the girl revealed herself. "But with shirt up..." instructed another, before the girl did it again. The girls, both of whom had braces and appeared to be younger than 18, said they loved to roller-skate, mentioned their homeroom class, and said they didn't know what an "underboob" was after being asked to show some. It's not clear whether the users directing the girls were also minors or were adults. But whatever the age of the commenters, their behavior was in violation of Periscope's standards, which bars users from engaging in sexual acts and "directing inappropriate comments to minors in a broadcast."

In another alarming video, a pair of girls who described themselves as sisters (one said she was 14, and the other appeared to be several years younger) were asked to show their bras and their underwear and pressured by multiple commenters to continue to strip. "Dare y'all to play rock, paper, scissors, and loser has to flash," said one viewer, after both girls had already shown their underwear.

Launched in 2015, Periscope makes it easy for anyone to start a broadcast that others can watch live and send comments to the broadcaster while he or she is filming. Commenters can also send broadcasters hearts to show that they're enjoying the live content. As you Periscope, you can see the comments and hearts in response to your stream. There is also

a private stream function, which is only available to users who follow each other. In incidents like the ones described above, commenters routinely ask the young broadcaster to follow them, perhaps hoping to engage in a private video stream.

Although concerned Periscope users have been alerting the company that some people were using its app to coax children into inappropriate behavior for more than a year—and in July, the **BBC even aired** an investigation into how users on Periscope were pressuring children with sexually explicit messages—children and teenagers can still be swamped with requests from viewers to do things like take off their shirts and pants, show their underwear, show their feet, kiss other kids, do handstands, and answer lewd questions. In other words, it's clear the company hasn't figured out how to solve the problem. In response to the BBC's reporting, Periscope said, "We have a strong content moderation policy and encourage viewers to report comments they feel are abusive. We have zero tolerance for any form of child sexual exploitation."

It's not that Periscope hasn't done anything. On Nov. 27, about five months after the BBC report, Periscope **rolled out an update** to its reporting tool that allows users to flag potentially inappropriate content. The updated tool includes a category for "child safety," as well as a way to flag "sexually inappropriate" comments by users talking to broadcasters on livestreams. In that **announcement**, Periscope said that since "the beginning of 2017, we have banned more than 36,000 accounts for engaging or attempting to engage inappropriately with minors." This announcement, however, came in the form of a post on Medium (where Periscope only has 116 followers), which the company **tweeted** out five days after publishing it, after updating it to add details on the new reporting tools. In the app itself, there was no announcement or indication that the new feature existed that I've been able to find, suggesting that many Periscope users might be unaware of the updated reporting tool.

I contacted Periscope on Nov. 30 to ask about explicit interactions with minors on the platform and what the company is doing to solve the problem. In response, Periscope encouraged me to report any problematic videos found in the future and said that it has "a team that reviews each and every report and works as quickly as possible to remove content that violates our **Community Guidelines**." I then asked about the size of the team, which Periscope said in its recent Medium post is expanding, and asked for more information about what else the company is doing about this kind of content. I haven't

heard back but will update this piece if I do. I also asked the Department of Justice if it was aware of and had taken any actions regarding this activity on Periscope. A spokeswoman said, "As a matter of policy, the U.S. Department of Justice generally neither confirms nor denies the existence of an investigation."

In its Medium post Periscope did say that it's "working to implement new technology" that is supposed to help detect accounts that are potentially violating the company's policy and improve the reporting process—though at the moment, it's not clear whether that software is running or the company is relying on user reporting alone. (When pressed on that question, Periscope did not respond.) Due to the live nature of the videos, it's probably hard for Periscope to know exactly when a new one pops up that features a minor and attracts predatory commenters, though the platform has **removed live broadcasts while they are happening in the past.** "Unless they've got keywords down really tightly to know what constitutes a grooming message, ... automated detection may be a little harder to do just via existing algorithmic tools," Thomas Holt, a criminal justice professor at Michigan State University who specializes in computer crimes, told me. That means that having a reporting feature to help target accounts for removal is critically important, as is having staff to review the user reports. But, according to Holt, the efficacy of those reporting tools depends on how much users are even aware they exist. Kids might not even know when a pedophile is attempting to lure them into sexual acts, or even that it's wrong and should be reported. And again, even a strong reporting regime clearly isn't enough.

Videos of children being lured into sexual or inappropriate behavior on Periscope can rack up more than 1,000 views. The videos tend to follow a pattern: Once the stream starts, dozens of Periscope users flock into the comments, as if they had been alerted either on Periscope or via a separate forum outside of Periscope, suggesting some level of coordination. This type of swarming is common, according to Holt: "Multiple people will often start to send sexual requests, questions, or content in an attempt to exert a degree of social pressure on the person to respond to a request." This makes the request seem more normal, Holt says, and can manipulate a child to respond to a sexual request to please the group.

One place within Periscope that had become a hive for this kind of misbehavior was the "First Scope" channel, which curated streams from people using the platform for the first time, **according** to Geoff Golberg, a former active Periscope user who has been vocal in calling attention to the problem of inappropriate behavior directed toward minors on the

app. That channel was removed in November, months after Golberg sent emails to the company (which he **tweeted out**) about the potential of minors being sexually exploited in the channel.*

While it's good that Periscope is taking some degree of action, Holt says that the risk posed by virtually every social media platform—particularly ones that are more reliant on images than text, since text is easier to patrol with software—means it's critically important for parents to understand what their kids are doing when they're online, and to have conversations with them about what apps they use, what constitutes bad behavior, and how to report it. Periscope isn't the only popular social media site struggling to moderate how kids use the app. Last month, the *New York Times* **reported** how the YouTube Kids app hosted and recommended videos with disturbing animations of characters killing themselves and committing other violent acts. On Periscope, though, the dangers are heightened because of the live, instant nature of the broadcasts, which can put a mob of predators in conversation with children before there's time to intervene.

In many ways Periscope is a remarkable service, allowing anyone to share what they're doing in real time with viewers around the world, whether it's a confrontation with law enforcement or a hot-air balloon ride. But it also facilitates behavior that calls into question the utility of the entire enterprise—and how capable the company is of curbing that behavior effectively, either through moderation or software. Over at Alphabet,

YouTube is attempting to fix the problems on YouTube Kids by hiring more moderators. Twitter and Periscope should do even more than that. The safety of some of its most vulnerable users is at stake.

Correction, Dec. 18, 2017: *This article originally misspelled Geoff Golberg's last name. (Return.)*

THE VERGE

One of Twitter's new anti-abuse measures is the oldest trick in the forum moderation book

Tachy goes to coventry

By Dieter Bohn | @backlon | Feb 16, 2017, 9:07am EST
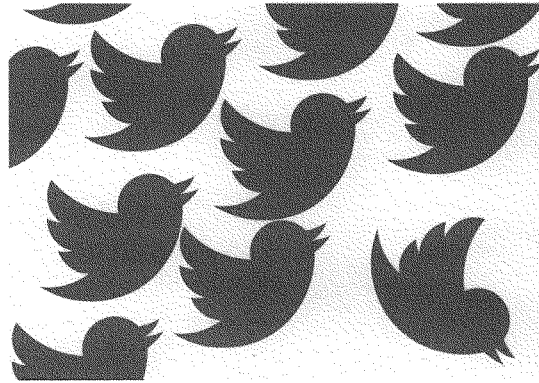
Overnight, *BuzzFeed* uncovered one of the ways that Twitter is filtering out abuse on its platform in its latest anti-harassment initiative. Users have begun getting notices that their tweets are on a kind of time-out. These users are being told that "only your followers can see your activity on Twitter for the amount of time shown below," followed by a number of hours — the examples seen so far are all 12 hours. It starts when the user clicks a button to "Continue to Twitter."

Allowing a user to continue to post to a forum but limiting who can actually see those posts is commonly known as a shadow ban or a stealth ban. But it has other names, and it's one of the oldest moderation tricks in the forum book. In its earlier iterations, vBulletin forum software called it "tachy goes to coventry."

It's an effective tactic because the abusive user still feels as though he is spewing bile into the community, but nobody actually has to see it. Twitter's take on it is smart from a moderation standpoint because it's at least letting the user know it's happening, while classic shadow banning on forums would sometimes happen without letting the user know in a kind of reverse troll — which would inevitably lead to a backlash of sockpuppet accounts when the user figured it out. In the meantime, though, it's satisfying to know that when trolls think they're trolling, what they're actually doing is shouting into the void.

On smaller forums, time-outs can also be effective for some users — it's a minor punishment for an infraction and it gives angry users some time to cool off and see how the community interacts without their input. The ones who aren't actively malicious might see that it goes better when they're not trolling and end up coming back as more valuable members of the group.

> >automatically get limited cause I said retard
>
> I'm just considering leaving Twitter, fuck them pic.twitter.com/2NZpOPmlo2
>
> — Drybones ⚘ (@Drybones5) February 14, 2017

Twitter itself has been intentionally vague about what its precise policies and tools are for limiting the reach of harassers, because the company believes that they will "seek to use the information to game the system," as Casey Newton put it. That's another thing that often happens on smaller forum communities. After a ban citing a rule, the user will often try to litigate the precise rule that was used to ban them, and usually those arguments are not in good faith.

However (you knew there'd be a however), this is Twitter we're talking about, not a small forum community. So the things that work on forums — with users who often actually deserve the benefit of the doubt — are not guaranteed to work on Twitter. Something is better than nothing, of course, and the nuance in Twitter's variation on shadow banning seems to imply that the company is giving some thought to how it tackles abuse.

On the forums I've run, I've never used rule litigation as an excuse to hide the rules, and found that shadow banning often ends up being more trouble than it's worth. It's laudable

that Twitter is trying to be nuanced in its approach. But when it comes to banning trolls, nuance isn't the only thing you need. Sometimes you just have to break out the banhammer.

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September 28, 2018

Mr. Jack Dorsey
CEO
Twitter, Inc.
1355 Market Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Mr. Dorsey:

Thank you for appearing before the Committee on Energy and Commerce on Wednesday, September 5, 2018, to testify at the hearing entitled "Twitter: Transparency and Accountability."

Pursuant to the Rules of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, the hearing record remains open for ten business days to permit Members to submit additional questions for the record, which are attached. To facilitate the printing of the hearing record, please respond to these questions by the close of business on Monday, October 15, 2018. Your responses should be mailed to Ali Fulling, Legislative Clerk, Committee on Energy and Commerce, 2125 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515 and e-mailed in Word format to ali.fulling@mail.house.gov.

Thank you again for your time and effort preparing and delivering testimony before the Committee.

Sincerely,

Greg Walden
Chairman

cc: Frank Pallone, Ranking Member

Attachment

The responses to Mr. Dorsey's questions for the record can be found at: https://docs.house.gov/meetings/IF/IF00/20180905/108642/HHRG-115-IF00-Wstate-DorseyJ-20180905-SD005.pdf.

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