



March 24, 2021

Twitter, Inc.

1355 Market St. #900
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Ranking Member Rodgers:

Thank you for your March 11, 2021, letter inquiring about our content moderation policies and practices.

As Jack Dorsey, our CEO, will discuss in his testimony tomorrow, we recognize there is a trust deficit that has been building over the last several years affecting our service, not only for technology companies but also for the broader information ecosystem and institutions.

We strive to implement policies impartially and at scale. We built our policies primarily around the promotion and protection of three fundamental human rights — freedom of expression, safety, and privacy. As we develop, implement, and enforce our policies, we seek to balance these rights that can sometimes come into conflict with one another. Additionally, our policies must be adaptable to changes in behavior and evolving circumstances.

In an effort to do our part to address the trust deficit, Twitter is focusing on solutions aimed at enhancing transparency, embracing procedural fairness, increasing user choice, and protecting privacy.

Please see the answers to your specific questions below. Our team is available to answer any follow-up questions you might have or discuss these issues in greater detail. Thank you for your ongoing dialogue, and we look forward to continued conversations about solutions that earn your trust and advance the principles we've proposed.

1. As it relates to Twitter's content policies, please answer the following:

a. What process does Twitter undertake to determine whether content on its platform violates its policies and is any outside person or third party involved in that process? If so, please identify such outside person or third party and how they are involved.

b. What process does Twitter undertake to determine whether a user should be suspended or deplatformed and is any outside person or third party involved in that process? If so, please identify such outside person or third party and how they are involved.

c. When content is flagged or reported by users, what process does Twitter undertake to determine whether such content violates its policies? Please explain.

d. Does Twitter have an appeal process to challenge content decisions or decisions to suspend or deplatform users? If yes, please describe such process.

Policy Development

Consistent with its First Amendment rights, Twitter has developed a series of policies—the [Twitter Rules](#)—to govern how Twitter can be used and to ensure safety, privacy, and authenticity across the platform. All individuals accessing or using Twitter’s services must adhere to the policies set forth in these rules and agree to do so as part of our Terms of Service.

In crafting our rules, we consult experts, including our Trust & Safety Council and ad-hoc groups for specific issues, and strive to seek input from the public as we evaluate policies, as evidenced by our current efforts seeking [feedback](#) on our World Leaders Policy.

Policy Enforcement

We use a combination of machine learning and human review to assess potential violations of the Twitter Rules. In determining whether to take enforcement action against specific behavior or accounts we consider a number of factors, including (but not limited to) whether:

- the behavior is directed at an individual, group, or protected category of people;
- the report of a potential rule violation has been filed by the target of the abuse or a bystander;
- the user behind the potentially violative content has a history of violating our policies;
- the severity of the violation;
- the content may be a topic of legitimate public interest.

In most cases and where legally appropriate, when we take action on a Tweet, we show the violator the offending Tweet, explain which Rule was broken, and require them to remove the content before they can Tweet again. If someone repeatedly violates our Rules, our enforcement actions become stronger. We may require violators to remove the Tweet and we may take additional actions such as verifying account ownership and/or temporarily limiting an individual's ability to Tweet for a set period of time. If someone continues to violate Rules beyond that point, their account may be permanently suspended.

Twitter Rules are enforced exclusively by our internal teams. No “outside” individuals are involved in making content-related enforcement decisions.

Please note that we do receive legal requests related to content and will review and respond to these in accordance with our [law enforcement guidelines](#). We provide detail on these requests in our transparency reports.

Procedural Fairness

As part of our effort to ensure procedural fairness, we strive to give people an easy, clear way to appeal decisions we make that they think are not right. For example, individuals can appeal a suspension through the platform interface or by [filing a report](#) online.

Transparency

Our [Twitter Transparency Center](#) provides information and statistics regarding accounts against which we have taken enforcement actions across twelve categories of terms of service violations.

More information about our enforcement philosophy and practices is publicly available on our [Help Center](#).

2. Since January 2020, please list every Republican public official—federal, state, or local—Twitter has suspended or deplatformed.

Twitter does not use political viewpoints, ideology, or party affiliation to make decisions related to content moderation. As noted above, we look at various factors to determine whether accounts or Tweets are in violation of the Twitter Rules. We apply the Twitter Rules impartially, and our [Transparency Center](#) makes information regarding accounts against which we have taken enforcement action publicly available for all those interested.

Because we do not categorize or track the accounts against which we take enforcement action based on the politics or ideology of the account holder, we do not have the data requested.

3. Since January 2020, please list every Democrat public official—federal, state, or local—Twitter has suspended or deplatformed.

Please see the response to question (2), above.

4. Since January 2020, as it relates to heads of government and world leaders, please identify each account Twitter has suspended or deplatformed and identify the specific policy for such decisions.

We have made clear that no world leader is completely above the Twitter Rules, and we have taken enforcement action, including the removal of

content, on accounts related to numerous government officials and world leaders across the globe for violating our policies against the glorification of violence and platform manipulation, among others. These accounts have ranged from those belonging to heads of nations to those affiliated with local officials within countries.

We recognize that suspending an account has significant ramifications, especially when that account belongs to a world leader or head of state. Politicians and government officials are constantly evolving how they use our service, and we want our policies to remain relevant to the ever-changing nature of political discourse on Twitter and protect the health of the public conversation.

In recent months, there have been increased questions about how we should address rule violations by world leaders, and whether we are striking the right balance between mitigating harm and ensuring access to information that is in the public interest. As a result, we are re-examining our approach to world leaders and soliciting feedback from the public. Starting on March 19, 2021, we called for responses to a [public survey](#) that will help inform the development of our policy framework. The questionnaire will be available in multiple languages and will close on Monday, April 12, 2021, at 5 p.m. PT. We are simultaneously consulting with a range of human rights experts, civil society organizations, and academics worldwide whose feedback will be reflected in forthcoming revisions to the policy framework.

We want to serve the public conversation and allow the public to hear from and engage with leaders around the world. Ultimately, our aim is to have a policy that appropriately balances fundamental human rights and considers the global context in which we operate.

5. Without disclosing personally identifiable information, please disclose any content removed by Twitter related to Black Lives Matter riots and identify the number of accounts suspended or disabled for posting such content.

We do not have this data, as we do not categorize or track the content we remove or the accounts against which we take enforcement action based on the politics or ideology of the account holder. We remove content and suspend accounts—either temporarily or permanently—based on the factors set forth in response to question (1), above.

Please refer to our [Transparency Center](#) for additional metrics regarding accounts against which we have taken enforcement actions across twelve categories of terms of service violations.

6. On June 1, 2020, now-Vice President Kamala Harris posted “If you’re able to, chip in now to the Minnesota Freedom Fund to help post bail for those protesting on the ground in Minnesota” and linked to an ActBlue Fund. Please explain how this post does not violate Twitter’s policies.

Our enforcement teams reviewed this Tweet and determined it does not violate the Twitter Rules.

7. As it relates to news articles on Twitter, please answer the following:

a. Since January 2020, how many news articles has Twitter temporarily or permanently blocked? Please identify each article and explain the specific policy such articles violated.

b. What is the process Twitter undertakes to determine which articles should be temporarily or permanently blocked? Please identify the specific criteria for determining whether an article should be blocked.

We apply the Twitter Rules impartially to all entities that use our service. Because we do not track the content against which we have enforced based on whether it was in the form of an article, we do not have the data you are requesting. Our [policy](#) on blocking or limiting the spread of URL links on Twitter is publicly available.

8. Does Twitter have a process to communicate, consult, and coordinate with law enforcement to address illicit content? If so, please explain.

Information sharing and engagement can be critical to Twitter’s success in safeguarding the conversation occurring on Twitter in certain circumstances. We have well-established relationships with law enforcement agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation and others. Consistent with applicable law, we look forward to continued cooperation with federal, state, and local government agencies on a variety of issues because in certain circumstances, only they have access to information critical to our joint efforts to stop bad-faith actors.

Twitter has detailed, [publicly available guidelines](#) for law enforcement authorities seeking assistance. These guidelines set forth how law enforcement authorities can request Twitter account information, content removal, data preservation, and emergency disclosures; our global teams respond to each of these types of requests on a daily basis.

9. Does Twitter have a process to preserve evidence of illegal content on its platform to assist law enforcement? If so, please explain.

Twitter retains different types of information for different lengths of time, and in accordance with our [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). Given Twitter's real-time nature, some information may only be stored for a very brief period of time. Where legally appropriate, we accept requests from law enforcement to preserve records that constitute potentially relevant evidence in legal proceedings. We will preserve, but not disclose, a temporary snapshot of the relevant account records for 90 days pending service of valid legal process.

Some information we store is automatically collected, while other information is provided at the user's discretion. More information on Twitter's retention policies can be found in our Privacy Policy.

10. Does Twitter coordinate with Google and Facebook on any content decisions? If so, please identify the categories of such content decisions.

Twitter does not coordinate with other entities on individual content moderation decisions.

We do voluntarily collaborate with industry peers to share information to inform and support our efforts related to terrorism, child sexual exploitation, election security, state-backed information operations, and COVID-19 misinformation. For example:

- In June 2017, we launched the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (the "GIFCT"), a partnership among Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and Microsoft. The GIFCT facilitates, among other things: information sharing; technical cooperation; and, research collaboration, including with academic institutions.
- We participate in the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's hash sharing database for industry and non-governmental organizations which consists of image and video hashes of known child sexual abuse material.
- We are a member of the Technology Coalition. This industry-led nonprofit organization strives to eradicate child sexual exploitation by mentoring emerging or established companies, sharing trends and best-practices across the industry, and facilitating technological solutions across the ecosystem.
- Along with a number of technology companies, we have established a dedicated, formal communications channel to facilitate real-time information sharing regarding election integrity. We also share information with our industry peers when we identify accounts acting in coordination in state-backed information operation campaigns.

- In March 2020, we announced an informal industry effort to share information about COVID-19. This followed requests by White House officials for the technology industry to come together to combat misinformation about the virus.

11. Does Twitter coordinate with Google and Facebook on any decisions related to suspending or deplatforming users? If so, please explain.

Twitter does not coordinate with other entities on individual content moderation decisions. Please see response to question (10), above, for additional details on how we share information with industry peers and government partners.

12. As it relates to former-President Trump, please answer the following:

a. Did Twitter coordinate with Google, Facebook, or any other tech company to make content decisions about his posts? If so, please explain.

b. Did Twitter coordinate with Google, Facebook, or any other tech company to suspend or remove his account? If so, explain.

Twitter did not coordinate with other platforms on decisions related to President Trump's account, including decisions to suspend it or take action on certain content.

13. Did Twitter coordinate with Google, Facebook, or any other tech company to make content decisions related to Black Lives Matter riots? If so, please explain.

Twitter did not coordinate with other platforms on decisions related to Black Lives Matter, including decisions to suspend accounts or take action on certain content.

14. Did Twitter coordinate with Google, Facebook, or any other tech company to suppress the October 14, 2020, New York Post article titled "Smoking-gun email reveals how Hunter Biden introduced Ukrainian businessman to VP dad"? If so, please explain.

Twitter did not coordinate with other platforms on decisions related to the October 14, 2020, New York Post article titled "Smoking-gun email reveals how Hunter Biden introduced Ukrainian businessman to VP dad."

15. Does Twitter alter its algorithms to drive certain content or narratives based on the political leaning of such content? If so, please explain.

Twitter does not alter its algorithms to drive certain content or narratives based on the political leanings reflected in the content.

Furthermore, as noted above, we are committed to providing more choice to how the people who use our service view content. In December 2018, Twitter introduced a sparkle icon located at the top of individuals' timelines to more easily switch on and off reverse-chronological timeline. The algorithms we employ are designed to help people see the most relevant Tweets. The icon now allows individuals using Twitter to easily switch to chronological order ranking of the Tweets from only those accounts they follow. This improvement allows individuals on Twitter to see how algorithms affect what they see, and enables greater transparency into the technology we use to rank Tweets.

16. What specific criteria does Twitter have that determines what content “trends” and the title for such trends? Are any employees involved in deciding what content “trends” or is that decision fully automated?

A combination of algorithms and our teams determine if a Tweet represents a trend by evaluating if the Tweet is very reflective of the trend and popular. Our algorithms are designed to identify representative Tweets that aren't potentially abusive, spam, or posted by accounts trying to take advantage of our system. In some cases, we may add brief descriptions to help add context. Descriptions will provide straightforward, clearly sourced context around why something is trending. Descriptions are developed by our curation team and follow their guidelines.

17. Please explain any efforts Twitter has undertaken to support local news and traditional media.

Twitter is a window into what's happening in the world, which is why some of the most active Twitter accounts belong to journalists. News often breaks first on Twitter, and everyone from national media outlets to reporters on the ground often use our service to update the public on developing stories. By engaging on Twitter, journalists generate greater interest and trust in their work.

Because journalism is core to Twitter's service, we believe we have a responsibility to protect that work. A year ago, as journalists came under unique economic threats and direct attempts at censorship in the context of the global COVID pandemic, we recognized our role in that mission. Last March, we donated one million dollars evenly distributed between the Committee to Protect Journalists and the International Women's Media Foundation. These funds were used to help ensure that these

organizations could continue their work in the face of new economic strains and to directly support journalists. We are also longtime sponsors of nonprofit organizations that support journalists in the U.S. and abroad.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to address your questions. We look forward to speaking with you and members of the Committee in greater detail this week and moving forward.

Sincerely,



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Head of U.S. Public Policy
Twitter

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