



STUDY: CensorTrack Documents Over 800 Cases of Big Tech Censoring COVID-19 Debate

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Big Tech speech restrictions turned COVID-19 into the most pro-censorship environment in the U.S. at least since World War II. Media Research Center has found more than 800 examples of bans, deleted content, and other speech restrictions related to the virus, as well as to resultant vaccines masking and government policies.

MRC Free Speech America tallied a whopping 808 total cases of COVID-19 censorship across a litany of Big Tech platforms between March 17, 2020, and Feb. 3, 2022, in its unique CensorTrack database. Those included Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google Ads, TikTok and YouTube. The platforms restricted anyone from skeptical epidemiologists to curious scientists to working journalists to concerned lawmakers speaking to constituents.



Those individuals and organizations censored include some of the most prominent influencers on social media: Podcaster **Joe Rogan**, conservative radio hosts **Dan Bongino** and **Mark Levin**, Fox News host **Tucker Carlson**, Sens. Rand Paul and Ron Johnson and news organizations from Fox News to Reason magazine. Even prominent academic journals like the **British Medical Journal**.

CensorTrack is an MRC **database designed** to show the proof of the extent of Big Tech censorship. The database team has logged 3,318 overall cases of censorship on

multiple Big Tech platforms concerning a myriad of issues such as elections, COVID-19, climate change and race. Each CensorTrack entry includes a written report backed up by internal records and documentation proving censorship.

The worst case of documented COVID-19 censorship came from Facebook. The platform **deleted** the Great Barrington Declaration's account page. **Prominent international disease experts** developed the declaration to oppose harsh COVID-19 lockdowns imposed on citizens by many world governments, measures that were shown to have had "little to no effect" on COVID-19 mortality, according to a Johns Hopkins University **study**.

Facebook didn't stop with the Great Barrington Declaration. The platform also went after the British Medical Journal for **accusing** a company contracted by vaccine producer Pfizer of engaging in practices that undermined "data integrity" related to the company's vaccine trials.

Those 808 cases likely barely scratch the surface. Big Tech authoritarians moved swiftly to silence accounts big and small. Prominent and well-connected users were generally the ones with resources to challenge and complain.

Even liberal comedian **Bill Maher** went after many of the mainstream COVID-19 narratives that turned out to be incorrect during the **Feb. 4, 2022, edition** of HBO's *Real Time*. Challenges to the mainstream narrative on COVID-19, such as the virus's origins, were repeatedly censored. For example, as Maher noted, "The former director of the CDC, Robert Redfield, believes COVID originated in a lab, and now, our intelligence agencies agree: It might have. **But for months on social media, it was banned to even discuss it.**" Maher is right on target. MRC President **Brent Bozell** slammed Facebook for having "essentially **admitted**" in May 2021 to censoring content that suggested that COVID-19 was man-made or manufactured. Bozell said in a **tweet** on the admission: "We now have PROOF that Facebook's fact-checker program actively suppressed valid debate about the origins of Covid and instead promoted Chinese propaganda. Facebook must end their fraudulent fact-check program now that we know how dangerous it is."

MRC Free Speech America's research relied on its CensorTrack database, which broke down the demographics of those censored by Big Tech in some manner for discussing COVID-19. The breakdown included the following:

- **41 Doctors/Scientists/Medical and Science Groups:** Big Tech platforms have censored 32 doctors and scientists and nine medical/science groups between March 17, 2020 and Feb. 3, 2022. The cases included prominent academic journals like the **British Medical Journal**, **MIT Technology Review**, in addition to notable

medical professionals like mRNA vaccine technology innovator **Dr. Robert Malone** and cardiologist **Dr. Peter McCullough**.

- **70 Media Personalities (Journalists, TV Anchors, YouTubers, Podcasters, Radio Hosts):** No one working in the media was safe from Big Tech's COVID-19 censorship blitz. Conservative radio hosts **Dan Bongino** and **Mark Levin**, podcaster **Joe Rogan**, Fox News host **Tucker Carlson**, podcaster and former One America News host **Liz Wheeler**, and Blaze Media podcaster **Daniel Horowitz** are a few of the names in the long list of media personalities who found themselves on the receiving end of Big Tech censorship for daring to share opinions on COVID-19 counter to the Silicon Valley giants' preferred narrative.
- **21 News Outlets:** News outlets weren't safe either, even though their primary job is to report the news to readers. **Fox News**, **Reason Magazine**, **Just the News** and **Sky News Australia** were just four of the news outlets listed in the CensorTrack database that showed how Big Tech censors COVID-19 news angles with which it disagrees.
- **7 Members of Congress:** Elected leaders who use social media platforms as a legitimate vehicle for communicating with constituents were not exempt from the Big Tech censor giants. The most egregious case documented in CensorTrack was YouTube **removing a censorship criticism video** by **Sen. Rand Paul** (R-KY) and reportedly suspending him for seven days. "Apparently, because I dared to contradict Dr. Fauci and the government YouTube removed my video," Paul commented in response.
- **Other Prominent Individuals Include:** **Sen. Ron Johnson** (R-WI), **Rep. Thomas Massie** (R-KY), **Rep. Nicole Malliotakis** (R-NY), **Rep. Byron Donalds** (R-FL), **Rep. Darrell Issa** (R-CA), Fox News host **Laura Ingraham**, YouTuber **David Rubin**, comedian **Steven Crowder**, conservative commentator **Candace Owens**, Turning Point USA Founder and CensorTrack board advisor **Charlie Kirk**, radio host **Buck Sexton** and Blaze Media host **Steve Deace**.

Big Tech to Medical Professionals: Only Pre-Approved Opinions.

A new **study** published by Johns Hopkins University concluded that "lockdowns have had little to no public health effects." In addition, the study demonstrated that the lockdowns "imposed enormous economic and social costs where they have been adopted." Here was the damning part: "Lockdowns have had little to no effect on COVID-19 mortality." Facebook silenced the voices of tens of thousands of medical and

public health experts who appear to have been right about the disastrous lockdown policies that **crippled the world economy** in one fell swoop.

What the Johns Hopkins study illustrates is that Facebook unjustifiably **deleted** the pro-freedom Great Barrington Declaration page around a year ago when the declaration would later turn out to be proven right. The declaration discussed the pro-freedom viewpoints of those against lockdowns and has obtained over 925,000 signatures in support of its argument: “Current lockdown policies are producing devastating effects on short and long-term public health.” The signatories included over 15,000 medical and public health scientists and over 46,000 medical practitioners.

CensorTrack documented 32 doctors and scientists and nine medical/science groups censored by Big Tech. In addition, CensorTrack logged 59 instances of Big Tech censoring professional medical opinions that disagreed with the establishment narrative. An outrageous example was Twitter **banning the account** of **Dr. Robert Malone**, an innovator in the field of mRNA vaccine technology. Twitter did not warn Malone before the suspension, **according to *The Epoch Times***. Twitter suspended the scientist’s 500,000-follower account for a vague reason, according to *The Epoch Times*: “Violating our policy on spreading misleading and potentially harmful information related to COVID-19.”

If Malone, who is an authority on vaccines, isn’t considered a viable voice by the Big Tech giants on the issue of COVID-19 and vaccines, then who is? Apparently, only voices that are pre-approved by Silicon Valley are allowed any say on COVID-19 without the risk of censorship, even if they spew blatant misinformation.

For example, The World Health Organization (WHO) **released** a January 2020 **tweet** toeing the Chinese Communist Party line that “Preliminary investigations conducted by the Chinese authorities have found no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission of the novel #coronavirus (2019-nCoV) identified in #Wuhan, #China.” Even the liberal *New York Times* **chastised** WHO for pushing Chinese communist propaganda. The newspaper wrote in an April 15, 2020 **story** that “global health officials and political leaders ... have said [the WHO] was too willing to accept information supplied by China, which still has not provided accurate numbers on how many people were infected and died during the initial outbreak in the country.”

The misinformation didn’t mean anything for the censorship activists at Twitter. WHO’s tweet pivoting off Chinese authorities to falsely claim there was “no clear evidence” of “human-to-human transmission” of COVID-19 **remains** on the platform without so much as a warning label. The tweet is not the only misinformation WHO has peddled.

The Times went after the WHO for **pushing** misinformation again in September 2020: “The World Health Organization said open borders would help fight disease. Experts, and a global treaty, emphatically agreed. But the scientific evidence was never behind them. ... When the coronavirus emerged in China in January, the World Health Organization **didn't flinch in its advice**: Do not restrict travel.”

The Times story concluded: “But what is now clear is that the policy was about politics and economics more than public health.”

Even the current patron saint of the liberal media — National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Dr. **Anthony Fauci** — has repeatedly contradicted himself over the past two years on COVID-19 guidance. One such example was Fauci's repeated moving of goalposts regarding the degree of U.S. herd immunity that would be necessary for life to return to normal. As *The New York Times* **noted**:

“In the pandemic's early days, Dr. Fauci tended to cite the same 60 to 70 percent estimate that most experts did. About a month ago, he began saying ‘70, 75 percent’ in television interviews. And last week, in an interview with CNBC News, he said ‘75, 80, 85 percent’ and ‘75 to 80-plus percent.’

“In a telephone interview the next day, Dr. Fauci acknowledged that he had slowly but deliberately been moving the goal posts.”

But Big Tech companies apparently don't tolerate people calling Fauci out for his falsehoods. Facebook, in particular, **slapped fact-checks on users** in 2021 who shared screenshots of Fauci's **publicly released email** to former President Barack Obama's Health and Human Services secretary **Sylvia Burwell** in which he instructed her not to wear a mask.

In his email dated Feb. 5, 2020, Fauci wrote, “Masks are really for infected people to prevent them from spreading infection to people who are not infected rather than protecting uninfected people from acquiring infection.” Later Fauci explained: “The typical mask you buy in the drug store is not really effective in keeping out virus, which is small enough to pass through material. It might, however, provide some slight benefit in keep[ing] out gross droplets if someone coughs or sneezes on you.”

The email mirrors his attitude in a March 8, 2020, *60 Minutes* interview during which he **said**, “Right now in the United States, people should not be walking around with masks.” Facebook fact-checker AFP **claimed** that the screenshots and articles reporting on Fauci's email were misleading because “[t]hat consensus changed as new information emerged” about COVID-19. **USA Today** and **PolitiFact**, two other Facebook fact-checkers, offered similar defenses of their “missing context” and “False” claims.

Both *USA Today* and Politifact are part of the **left-wing funded** International Fact-Checking Network, a project of the liberal Poynter Institute. Poynter **once tried to blacklist** 29 conservative outlets in 2019 as “UnNews.” IFCN even received \$1 million in 2020 from censorship giant Facebook. The platform announced a **partnership** with independent third-party fact-checkers that were members of IFCN, as well as **IFCN itself**. Liberal billionaire George Soros’ Open Society Foundations records suggest that **some of his** contributions between 2017 and 2019 went specifically to funding Poynter’s IFCN.

CBS’s *60 Minutes* **did a segment** in October 2020 trying to defend Fauci from his flip-flop guidance that people shouldn’t be wearing masks to outright claiming, “Cloth coverings work.” CBS Chief Medical Correspondent Dr. **John LaPook** tried to excuse the shift by saying: “In science, it’s what we do. In medicine, it’s what we do. We talk about the information that we know now.” But new information emerged again contradicting Fauci’s statement about the efficacy of cloth coverings. A CBS affiliate reported in a Jan. 6, 2022, **story**: “Health experts warn to stop wearing cloth masks.” The CBS affiliate stated: “Studies are coming out that say the cloth masks that most have been wearing since the pandemic began may look good with their array of stylish colors, but it has not been very effective.” Fauci, meanwhile, has reportedly tried to continue arguing that people should still wear cloth masks aside from N95 and KN95 masks because it's better than **not wearing** one at all: ““What the CDC has said — and it gets misinterpreted — they're saying wearing any mask is better than no mask at all.””

Fauci’s **repeated** flip-flopping **is** definitely **grounds** for scrutiny, but Big Tech seems ready to protect him at all costs because his opinion is pre-approved. Instagram even censored a satirical meme on Fauci’s **mask flip-flopping** in June 2021.

But you can count on Big Tech to take aim at other medical professionals who don’t adopt the Faucian line of thinking.

YouTube removed cardiologist and epidemiologist **Dr. McCullough**’s interview on *The Joe Rogan Experience* concerning the efficacy of hydroxychloroquine and Ivermectin. In addition, the discussion between McCullough and Rogan also centered on the general management of COVID-19 in the United States shut down by YouTube. YouTube **took down** the interview, claiming that it had been “removed for violating YouTube’s Community Guidelines.”

McCullough’s Twitter account later tweeted a snapshot showing that YouTube had issued a “Community Guidelines strike” against a **YouTube account** appearing to belong to McCullough for alleged “medical misinformation.” Facebook **suspended** libertarian

activist, former congressman and physician Dr. Ron Paul's account for 90 days. What set the censors off at Facebook was a **post about** the efficacy of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine and comments from the company's CEO. "Facebook has restricted my Ron Paul Page for 'sharing false information,'" he **tweeted**.

Paul shared images of a fact-check from the platform as well as the warning message he received. "I shared an interview with the Pfizer CEO saying in his OWN WORDS that two shots offers 'very limited protection, if any,'" Paul **added**. "[I]t was HIS OWN WORDS! What say you @Meta? You call that a 'fact check'?"

Big Tech to Media on COVID-19 Counter-Narratives: Shut Up or We'll Shut You Up!

In addition to censoring medical professionals, Big Tech also took a sledgehammer to media personalities and news outlets who don't agree with or challenged government COVID-19 policies and narratives (mask mandates, vaccine mandates, etc.). CensorTrack has logged 70 media personalities and 21 news outlets that Big Tech has attempted to silence.

YouTube suspended conservative radio host **Dan Bongino** because the platform took issue with his **claims** that masks were "useless" in preventing COVID-19. He had over 850,000 **subscribers** on his channel. The Bongino Report on Jan. 14 **posted** the following tweet after the suspension: "YouTube just suspended Dan's channel for daring to question the mask fascists. I guess they were waiting for an apology from us. But that's not quite how it worked out for them. Here's Dan's email to 'Coco' at YouTube telling them to plant a big wet kiss on his ass." YouTube **permanently banned Bongino** from its platform altogether about a week later.

In August 2021, **podcaster** and former OAN host **Liz Wheeler debunked** several flawed studies on mask effectiveness put forth by leftists, including Instagram fact-checker **Health Feedback**, which **fact-checked** the clip she posted of her podcast. Health Feedback, which recycled an old fact-check when it flagged her post, cited studies that she debunked in the fact-checked video.

The fact-checker pointed to a study published in **The Lancet** that allegedly showed the effectiveness of mask-wearing, but Wheeler claimed the study only tested N-95 masks and only in a hospital setting (not a community setting). The fact-checker cited another **study** published by the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, which Wheeler said "did not account for the natural decrease [in COVID-19 infection] and as a result 40 scientists called for this study to be withdrawn."

Media personalities who also happen to be famous journalists aren't safe either.

Just the News released a [report](#) Dec. 28 noting that its founder [John Solomon](#) was [suspended](#) from Twitter “for sharing an article about the legal distinctions between Pfizer's fully approved and emergency use authorization (EUA) COVID-19 vaccines.” The distinction “could affect the legality of vaccine mandates.” Twitter [slapped the article](#) Solomon attempted to share with a “[Warning: this link may be unsafe](#)” label and propagandized that it “could lead to real-world harm.”

Perhaps Twitter likes vaccine mandates? “An immunologist who reviewed the article told Just the News he saw nothing wrong with it factually,” according to the statement. Twitter had reportedly “limited” Solomon's account temporarily for 12 hours because his tweet allegedly violated “its policy on ‘spreading misleading and potentially harmful information’ related to COVID.”

Big Tech to Elected Leaders: Agree With Us or You Will Be Silenced.

Big Tech also prevents national lawmakers from getting a pass in the COVID-19 debate. In fact, CensorTrack documented seven members of Congress who social media platforms censored for COVID-19 wrongthink. Here are a few examples of senators and congressmen getting targeted by Big Tech for daring to have an opinion on COVID-19:

- YouTube [removed a censorship criticism video](#) by [Sen. Rand Paul](#) (R-KY), and reportedly suspended him for seven days. “Apparently, because I dared to contradict Dr. Fauci and the government YouTube removed my video,” Paul commented in his response.
- Twitter [slapped](#) a sharing restriction on [Sen. Ron Johnson's](#) (R-WI) tweet showing an adverse event comparison of various COVID-19 treatments.
- Twitter [censored Rep. Thomas Massie](#) (R-KY) for a tweet about natural immunity and slapped its most restrictive label, “Misleading,” over it.
- YouTube [deleted Rep. Nicole Malliotakis'](#) (R-NY) press conference announcing a lawsuit against former New York Mayor Bill de Blasio's “vaccine passports” for businesses.

Big Tech COVID-19 Censorship: Just a Bit Bipartisan

COVID-19 censorship was at least a little bipartisan. A few liberal accounts suffered the same censorship. [Children's Health Defense](#) Chairman and [notorious](#) leftist [eco-](#)

extremist Robert F. Kennedy Jr. saw his Instagram account deplatformed. Kennedy was censored reportedly for alleged “**false COVID-19 vaccine claims**” and “**vaccine misinformation.**” The **leftist-funded Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH)** issued a report called the “**Disinformation Dozen**” calling for Kennedy to be censored along with other so-called “anti-vaxxers.”

The CCDH called for Kennedy and the others to be banned for pushing what it determined to be “digital misinformation about Covid vaccines.” Political affiliation didn’t matter. Big Tech platforms targeted many who dared to question COVID-19 treatments, masking regulations and more. Even the White House used the CCDH’s report to push for more censorship online. According to a July 16, 2021, **CNN report:**

“The White House turned up the pressure on Silicon Valley to get a handle on vaccine misinformation Thursday, specifically singling out 12 people one group dubbed the ‘disinformation dozen,’ saying they were responsible for a great deal of misinformation about Covid-19. ‘There’s about 12 people who are producing 65% of anti-vaccine misinformation on social media platforms,’ White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said.”

The CCDH continued to try throwing its weight around. It **published a report** called “**The Toxic Ten**” that targeted the MRC, in addition to eight other conservative organizations for daring to challenge the left-wing climate-change fear-mongering narratives: The Daily Wire, Breitbart News, *The Washington Times*, Townhall Media, Newsmax, The Federalist Papers, The Patriot Post and The Western Journal. It accused these organizations of producing “content that sows climate change skepticism on social media platforms, creating the sense that there is a more extensive debate than there really is.”

CCDH founder and CEO **Imran Ahmed** has a **history** as an activist for Britain’s leftist Labour Party. He also co-authored a book attacking free-market economist Friedrich Hayek titled “**The New Serfdom: The Triumph of Conservative Ideas and How to Defeat Them.**” Apparently defeating conservatives means silencing their voices online.

Methodology: *Instances of COVID-19-related censorship logged in the MRC CensorTrack database are included in the 808 total. CensorTrack entries were classified based on the reason platforms gave for the censorship or the nature of the content censored. MRC Free Speech America verified the credentials of each physician (MD) censored through individual state medical licensure databases and the UK’s General Medical Council licensure database. Scientists (PhD’s) with expertise in epidemiology, immunology, pharmacology, biochemistry and microbiology were included among the 32 experts censored. MRC Free Speech America verified each expert’s credentials via*

professional biographies published by the institutions that employ(ed) each scientist and/or by identifying peer-reviewed literature authored by the scientist. The 70 media personalities were identified as those who work for a media organization or who previously worked for a major media outlet, YouTubers with over 10,000 subscribers or podcasters.

Conservatives are under attack. Contact your representatives and demand that Big Tech be held to account to mirror the First Amendment while providing transparency. If you have been censored, contact us at the Media Research Center [contact form](#), and help us hold Big Tech accountable.

AMERICA'S MEDIA WATCHDOG



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