



**Statement for the Record of Media Matters for America  
U.S. House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Communications &  
Technology**

*March 28, 2023*

**RE: Hearing on Preserving Free Speech and Reining in Big Tech Censorship**

Dear Subcommittee Chair Bob Latta and Ranking Member Doris Matsui, and Members of the Committee,

Media Matters for America is a 501(c)(3) media watchdog and research information center. We work daily to document how the misinformation and disinformation that is spread both on and offline is fracturing our already vulnerable media landscape.

Allegations that social media companies are biased against conservatives or that they censor right-wing content are common in right-wing media and, ironically, on the same social media platforms that supposedly censor these users.<sup>1</sup> These claims are the latest evolution of a longstanding right-wing effort to brand the mainstream press as biased against conservatives in an attempt to “work the refs” and get favorable treatment, this time from tech giants.<sup>2</sup>

As we have seen in similar congressional hearings of this nature, we anticipate GOP members will invoke this false and repeatedly debunked narrative, claiming that social media platforms have an anti-conservative bias.

The record is clear: conservative content is not being censored online. Media Matters has demonstrated that Facebook, for instance, has catered to conservative users at every possible opportunity. **Facebook’s algorithm amplifies posts that invoke an emotional response, rewarding sensational and divisive content.** As a result, right-leaning pages

---

<sup>1</sup> Cristina Lopez G., Media Matters for America, “When conservatives claim censorship, they’re often just showcasing their tech ignorance,” April 10, 2019, <https://www.mediamatters.org/sean-hannity/when-conservatives-claim-censorship-theyre-often-just-showcasing-their-tech-ignorance>

<sup>2</sup> Paul Krugman, The New York Times, “Working the Refs,” October 31, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/31/opinion/working-the-refs.html>

that frequently post this type of inflammatory content often outperform other news and politics pages.<sup>3 4 5 6</sup>

Media Matters has conducted several studies of hundreds of Facebook pages to investigate whether there is anti-conservative bias on the platform, with data going back to 2018.<sup>7</sup> **We found that right-leaning Facebook pages actually outperform both left-wing and ideologically non-aligned pages in engagement**, even though they often post less content overall.<sup>8 9 10</sup> Additionally, right-wing Facebook pages dominate the conversation on the platform around some of the most important political issues of our time, including on voting, abortion, attacks on the LGBTQ community, and the national protests against police violence towards unarmed Black people.<sup>11 12 13 14 15</sup>

But the most glaring evidence disproving the idea that Facebook has an anti-conservative bias was the decision by Meta – the company that now owns Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp – to allow former President Donald Trump to return to its platforms, ignoring his continued “risk to public safety,” which was the bar the company purportedly set for his return.<sup>16</sup> Trump’s

---

<sup>3</sup> Kayla Gogarty, Media Matters for America, “Breitbart thrives on Facebook, in part because the platform rewards sensational photos and videos,” December 20, 2021, <https://www.mediamatters.org/facebook/breitbart-thrives-facebook-part-because-platform-rewards-sensational-photos-and-videos>

<sup>4</sup> Kayla Gogarty, Media Matters for America, “Facebook has a problem with sensational and misleading content despite VP Nick Clegg’s claims,” April 12, 2021, <https://www.mediamatters.org/facebook/facebook-has-problem-sensational-and-misleading-content-despite-vp-nick-clegg-claims>

<sup>5</sup> Kayla Gogarty, Media Matters for America, “As YouTube and Google ban Dan Bongino for misinformation, Facebook profits from helping him promote the same false and sensational content,” February 8, 2022, <https://www.mediamatters.org/facebook/youtube-and-google-ban-dan-bongino-misinformation-facebook-profits-helping-him-promote>

<sup>6</sup> Kayla Gogarty, Media Matters for America, “Facebook tweaked its News Feed algorithm, and right-leaning pages are reaping the benefits,” October 8, 2021, <https://www.mediamatters.org/facebook/facebook-tweaked-its-news-feed-algorithm-and-right-leaning-pages-are-reaping-benefits#paragraph--section-heading--3421561>

<sup>7</sup> John Whitehouse, Media Matters for America, “The data is crystal clear: There is absolutely no evidence of anti-conservative bias on Facebook,” August 20, 2019, <https://www.mediamatters.org/facebook/heres-data-facebooks-bias-report-doesnt-show-you>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 3

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 4

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 6

<sup>11</sup> Kayla Gogarty, Media Matters for America, “Right-wing talking points get most engagement in Facebook posts about voting, including unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud and attacks on voting by mail,” June 18, 2020, <https://www.mediamatters.org/voter-fraud-and-suppression/right-wing-talking-points-get-most-engagement-facebook-posts-about>

<sup>12</sup> Madelyn Webb and Natalie Martinez, Media Matters for America, “Study: Right-wing sources dominate abortion-related news on Facebook,” May 28, 2019, <https://www.mediamatters.org/facebook/study-right-wing-sources-dominate-abortion-related-news-facebook>

<sup>13</sup> Kayla Gogarty, Media Matters for America, “Study: Right-wing fearmongering leads Facebook engagement about peaceful protests,” June 5, 2020, <https://www.mediamatters.org/black-lives-matter/study-right-wing-fearmongering-leads-facebook-engagement-about-peaceful-protests>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 5

<sup>15</sup> Kayla Gogarty, Media Matters for America, “On Facebook, right-leaning pages are dominating discussion of Florida’s new anti-LGBTQ legislation,” April 6, 2022, <https://www.mediamatters.org/facebook/facebook-right-leaning-pages-are-dominating-discussion-floridas-new-anti-lgbtq-legislation>

<sup>16</sup> Kayla Gogarty, Media Matters for America, “Meta just gave Trump the green light to push harmful misinformation and extremism on its platforms,” January 25, 2023,

rhetoric, clearly documented on his social media platform Truth Social and in media appearances, shows that he has not dialed back the behavior that inspired an attempted insurrection, but rather, that his false claims and incendiary rhetoric have become more extreme during his suspension from Meta’s platforms. Meta’s decision is a green light for Trump to promote this harmful content on its platforms, and it shows plainly that the company prioritizes profit — and appeasement of right-wing figures — over public safety.

These priorities are not unique to Meta. **Media Matters has also documented how companies like YouTube and TikTok have allowed right-wing content to proliferate and even be monetized on their platforms.** Despite the fact that it violates the platforms’ Terms of Service, both companies have amplified COVID-19 and election misinformation, as well as white supremacy and homophobia — **allowing misinformation and hate speech to reach millions of viewers.**<sup>17 18 19 20 21</sup>

Although Facebook has been the target of more scrutiny for its role as a purveyor of dis- and misinformation, YouTube is indeed also a major conduit of disinformation and misinformation worldwide.<sup>22</sup> Ahead of the 2022 midterms, Media Matters identified YouTube videos, including videos from monetized accounts, that alleged **there will be vote rigging in favor of Democrats and continued lies about election fraud in previous elections.**<sup>23</sup> And during Pride Month in 2022, Media Matters found that several **YouTube videos from right-wing accounts seemingly violated YouTube’s hate speech policy and garnered hundreds of thousands of views** as the thumbnails and titles promoted the anti-LGBTQ “groomer” slur.<sup>24</sup>

The most popular and youth-driven platform of the bunch, TikTok, uses its **“For You” page feature to amplify misinformation and other harmful content** to users across the platform. In a series of studies, Media Matters found that a **TikTok video featuring white**

---

<https://www.mediamatters.org/facebook/meta-just-gave-trump-green-light-push-harmful-misinformation-and-extremism-its-platforms>

<sup>17</sup> Olivia Little and Abbie Richards, Media Matters for America, “TikTok’s algorithm is amplifying COVID-19 and vaccine misinformation,” August 18, 2021,

<https://www.mediamatters.org/tiktok/tiktoks-algorithm-amplifying-covid-19-and-vaccine-misinformation>

<sup>18</sup> Spencer Silva, Media Matters for America, “Report: January 6 investigators confirm that social media platforms “bent their rules to avoid penalizing conservatives” ahead of the insurrection,” January 18, 2023,

<https://www.mediamatters.org/january-6-insurrection/report-january-6-investigators-confirm-social-media-platforms-bent-their>

<sup>19</sup> Olivia Little, Media Matters for America, “Misinformation about the midterm elections is already flourishing on TikTok,” November 1, 2022,

<https://www.mediamatters.org/tiktok/misinformation-about-midterm-elections-already-flourishing-tiktok>

<sup>20</sup> Abbie Richards, Media Matters for America, “TikTok continues to allow videos of neo-Nazi to go viral,” July 6, 2022, <https://www.mediamatters.org/tiktok/tiktok-continues-allow-videos-neo-nazi-go-viral>

<sup>21</sup> Justin Horowitz, Media Matters for America, “Beyond Andrew Tate: Meet the misogynistic “manosphere” influencers proliferating across social media,” March 16, 2023,

<https://www.mediamatters.org/diversity-discrimination/beyond-andrew-tate-meet-misogynistic-manosphere-influencers-proliferating>

<sup>22</sup> Dan Milmo, The Guardian, “YouTube is major conduit of fake news, factcheckers say,” January 12, 2022,

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/jan/12/youtube-is-major-conduit-of-fake-news-factcheckers-say>

<sup>23</sup> Spencer Silva, Media Matters for America, “Election misinformation proliferates on YouTube ahead of midterms,” November 7, 2022,

<https://www.mediamatters.org/google/election-misinformation-proliferates-youtube-ahead-midterms>

<sup>24</sup> Sophie Lawton, Media Matters for America, “Right-wing clickbait pushing anti-LGBTQ “groomer” smears are increasingly popular on YouTube,” June 23, 2022,

<https://www.mediamatters.org/google/right-wing-clickbait-pushing-anti-lgbtq-groomer-smears-are-increasingly-popular-youtube>

**supremacist Paul Miller wearing Nazi symbols and saying the N-word was on the platform for nearly three months and earned 5 million views**, and that white nationalist streamer **Nick Fuentes and his followers (known as “Groypers”)** used **TikTok to promote white nationalist content, garnering millions of combined views** and successfully evading the platform’s ban on this type of rhetoric.<sup>25 26</sup>

Although TikTok promised to remove video duplicates of bigoted social media influencer Andrew Tate, **Tate fan accounts continue to repost and spread his hateful content, earning millions of likes.**<sup>27</sup> And more damning, in a Media Matters study ahead of the 2020 midterm elections, **TikTok failed to detect 70% of election misinformation uploaded** to its platform from a dummy account.<sup>28</sup>

After Elon Musk purchased a significant stake in Twitter in April 2022, right-wing pundits begged him to take action against Twitter’s nonexistent anti-conservative bias.<sup>29</sup> Less than a month later, after Twitter accepted now-CEO Musk’s bid to buy the platform, conservatives were ecstatic that Musk would put an end to Twitter’s supposed conservative censorship. **But as Media Matters noted, conservatives were never able to support their claims of anti-conservative bias.**<sup>30</sup>

After officially acquiring the platform in October 2022, Musk provided access to private Twitter information, which led to the publishing of the so-called “Twitter Files” in an effort to claim that Twitter — prior to Musk’s leadership — suppressed conservative voices.<sup>31</sup> **In reality, the “Twitter Files” revealed little new information and instead detailed Twitter’s internal conversations about content moderation. Nonetheless, conservatives latched onto these reports to claim that conservatives were in fact censored on Twitter, all while conveniently ignoring evidence in the “Twitter Files” to the contrary.**<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 20

<sup>26</sup> Alex Kaplan and Olivia Little, Media Matters for America, “‘Groypers’ are using TikTok to promote white nationalist content, evading the platform’s ban,” August 29, 2022, <https://www.mediamatters.org/tiktok/groypers-are-using-tiktok-promote-white-nationalist-content-evading-platforms-ban>

<sup>27</sup> Olivia Little, Media Matters for America, “Andrew Tate videos are widely circulating on TikTok because of fan accounts, despite the platform’s promised ban,” August 22, 2022, <https://www.mediamatters.org/tiktok/andrew-tate-videos-are-widely-circulating-tiktok-because-fan-accounts-despite-platforms>

<sup>28</sup> Olivia Little, Media Matters for America, “TikTok fails to detect election misinformation, doesn’t penalize repeat distributors,” November 8, 2022, <https://www.mediamatters.org/tiktok/tiktok-fails-detect-election-misinformation-doesnt-penalize-repeat-distributors>

<sup>29</sup> Mia Gingerich and Madeleine Davison, Media Matters for America, “Right-wing media ask Elon Musk to end Twitter’s nonexistent censorship and bring Trump back to platform,” April 6, 2022, <https://www.mediamatters.org/twitter/right-wing-media-ask-elon-musk-end-twitters-nonexistent-censorship-and-bring-trump-back>

<sup>30</sup> Chloe Simon and Gideon Taaffe, Media Matters for America, “Conservatives are claiming that Elon Musk’s takeover of Twitter will expose biases against them on the platform. Those biases don’t exist,” April 27, 2022, <https://www.mediamatters.org/elon-musk/conservatives-are-claiming-elon-musks-takeover-twitter-will-expose-biases-against-them>

<sup>31</sup> Natalie Mathes and Camden Carter, Media Matters for America, “Musk’s “Twitter Files” repackage debunked claims to falsely allege crime, collusion, and conspiracy,” December 15, 2022, <https://www.mediamatters.org/twitter/musks-twitter-files-repackage-debunked-claims-falsely-allege-crime-collusion-and-conspiracy>

<sup>32</sup> Spencer Silva, Media Matters for America, “Fox News offered its viewers a distorted version of the House GOP hearing about Twitter,” February 9, 2023, <https://www.mediamatters.org/fox-news/fox-news-offered-its-viewers-distorted-version-house-gop-hearing-about-twitter-0>

Since taking over the platform, **Musk has reinstated dozens of extremist and misinformation-peddling accounts and has interacted with far-right accounts over a hundred times**, while also firing content moderation staff and kneecapping key content moderation policies, including the COVID-19 misinformation policy.<sup>33 34 35 36</sup>

Social media companies can and must create policies to address hate, abuse, misinformation, and disinformation on their platforms. Those violating the terms of service set by the platforms they chose to use must be held accountable for doing so. The real problem on the platforms is not that conservative speech is being unfairly censored; this, as we have established, is a lie. The real problem is that social media platforms do not do enough to enforce their own rules, allowing hate, abuse, toxicity, and lies to run rampant and cause real world harm.

Unfortunately, social media platforms have groveled in response to false accusations of anti-conservative bias by being even more permissive with purveyors of right-wing misinformation, which has led to the saturation – not stifling – of extremist and right-wing voices online.

**Sincerely,  
Media Matters for America**

---

<sup>33</sup> Kayla Gogarty and Ruby Seavey, Media Matters for America, “Elon Musk is unilaterally reinstating banned Twitter accounts, despite assuring civil rights groups and advertisers that he wouldn’t,” November 22, 2022, <https://www.mediamatters.org/twitter/elon-musk-unilaterally-reinstating-banned-twitter-accounts-despite-assuring-civil-rights>

<sup>34</sup> Charis Hoard, Audrey McCabe, and Ruby Seavey, Media Matters for America, “Elon Musk continues to cater to far-right Twitter accounts promoting bigotry, extremism, and misinformation,” December 15, 2022, <https://www.mediamatters.org/twitter/elon-musk-continues-cater-far-right-twitter-accounts-promoting-bigotry-extremism-and>

<sup>35</sup> Davey Alba and Kurt Wagner, Bloomberg, “Twitter Cuts More Staff Overseeing Global Content Moderation,” January 7, 2023, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-01-07/elon-musk-cuts-more-twitter-staff-overseeing-content-moderation>

<sup>36</sup> Rebecca Kern, Politico, “Twitter stops enforcing Covid-19 misinformation policy,” November 29, 2022, <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/11/29/twitter-stops-enforcing-covid-19-misinformation-policy-00071110>