

Additional Questions for the Record

**Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce**

**“Preserving Free Speech and Reining in Big Tech Censorship”
March 28, 2023**

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The Honorable Russ Fulcher

In the most recent installment of the Twitter Files, Matt Taibbi released dozens of emails between Twitter and the Stanford based Virality Project. This release exposed that Big Tech companies, the government, and academia worked together to censor true information during the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 1. Is it dangerous for the government and Big Tech to censor factual information?**

Yes.

- 2. Do you think the suppression of the truth will lead to Americans no longer trusting the government for medical information?**

Yes.

The Virality Project also showed that there were concerns that “increased doubts in one manufacturers vaccine may lead to hesitancy about vaccination overall.”

- 3. Do you believe Big Tech mishandled how they dealt with information about AstraZeneca?**

I don't know.

- 4. What type of impact do you think blocking that information had overall?**

I don't know.

I have made the point that if a social platform conducts editing, then they should lose their ability to be protected. This is because editing can sometimes result in changing the meaning of content. That change in meaning can lead to misinformation, misdirection, ruining of reputations, even civil unrest. As I noted in the TikTok hearing, there is a power of influence over users. This is especially true when AI algorithms can pump up and accelerate this misinformation, misdirection, and manipulative content.

You discussed transparency through reporting by social media companies as to how they have moderated content in your testimony. This is especially true in response to government requests to do so.

- 5. Can you expound on these requests, as well as decisions Big Tech companies make on their own to moderate content?**

Disclosures should be mandatory, immediate, and public to everyone, not just researchers and journalists.

6. How do you see such transparency reporting actions connecting to limits or guardrails on Section 230 liability protections, and on consumers being more educated as to understanding this power of influence by social media companies?

Qualifying for Section 230 should be dependent on reporting. When that happens, over time, consumers will become better educated about the censorship decisions companies make.

7. Can you build upon our discussion regarding how and, in what way, we should approach enforcement of transparency reporting? Anything to build on the ADPPA?

Disclosures should be immediate and censored individuals should have the right of response.

The silencing of the truth by Big Tech and government bureaucrats is extremely dangerous.

8. Has Section 230 created an environment where Big Tech feels that they are able to censor whomever or whatever they want without regard to the principle of free speech?

Yes. Big Tech companies are abusing the intent of Section 230 but it's up to Congress to change the law.

9. What does the future look like without Section 230 reform?

Without Section 230 reform, we can expect censorship to worsen significantly, since the censorship advocates, including government-funded ones, will be able to claim that they are simply "flagging" so-called "misinformation," not censoring it. We are staring down the barrel of digital totalitarianism far worse than anything possible in past totalitarian regimes because the channels for information have narrowed to a few Big Tech companies and the old-fashioned newspaper stands, copying machines, and other instruments of past press freedom are rapidly disappearing.