

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Cathy McMorris Rodgers**  
**Subcommittee on Commerce and Consumer Protection**  
**“Holding Big Tech Accountable: Legislation to Build a Safer Internet”**  
**December 9, 2021**  
*As Prepared for Delivery*

Thank you, Madam Chair, and to our witnesses.

Last week we discussed many examples of Big Tech companies failing to be good stewards of their platforms. Big Tech has used their power to censor Americans, control what we see, and manipulate us through the use of harmful algorithms.

Big Tech must be held accountable. That is why from day one of this Congress, Republicans have been exploring legislative solutions through our Big Tech Accountability Platform. As part of our Platform, we released a number of proposals to focus on content moderation, transparency, and protecting our kids online all issues that are relevant to today’s hearing.

My proposal—which I am leading alongside my good friend Congressman Jim Jordan – narrowly amends Section 230 to protect free speech. Under our proposal:

- Big Tech will be held accountable for censoring constitutionally protected speech.
- Big Tech will no longer be able to exploit the ambiguity and discretion we see in the current law;
- Big Tech will be more responsible for content they choose to amplify, promote, or suggest;
- Big Tech will be forced to be transparent about their content decisions; and
- Conservatives will be empowered to challenge Big Tech’s censorship decisions.

Republican policies would hold Big Tech accountable for their content moderation practices and encourage transparency on enforcement decisions, especially when it comes to illegal drugs, counterfeit and stolen products, terrorism, doxing, child pornography and trafficking, cyberbullying and revenge porn.

We are also looking at new ways to improve cooperation with law enforcement while upholding our civil liberties.

Some of the ideas presented in the Democrat-led bills on today's agenda do merit consideration. It is unfortunate, however, that the majority decided not to use this hearing to discuss privacy, given many of their bills include provisions directly related to the collection and use of data, and would be best addressed in the context of a comprehensive privacy and data security framework.

The proposals also include language on protecting data from wrongful purposes, other references to the Child Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) and a data portability provision. Despite our interest in continuing our work from last Congress on bipartisan privacy discussions, we have yet to have a hearing - let alone a markup - this year on something the American people desperately need and deserve.

How can we expect to achieve the goals discussed today when we continue to drag our feet? When we continue to talk, but never deliver on a national privacy and data security bill? Worse still, the Democrats tax and spending spree includes dramatic increases for funding and authority for the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) that never received bipartisan consensus.

The majority sold this as a way to protect Americans' personal data. This couldn't be further from the truth. It includes no privacy and data security framework to implement or enforce. These bills will add to the confusion in the marketplace by creating conflicting rules on how data is used, collected, and shared.

This confusion will only help Big Tech become more powerful and harm small businesses. The question I have to my Democrat colleagues is how would your bills fit into a comprehensive privacy and data security framework like the proposal Republicans released publicly in the absence of a comprehensive strategy from the majority?

Let me share another reason—which I'm sure we can all agree on—for why we need a national standard: Big Tech's troubling relationship with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Big Tech has not been responsible with the personal data they collect or who they share it with.

I am pleased that the majority included two related bills in the hearing today to help address this threat—one by Mr. Duncan and one by Mr. Kinzinger. Big Tech companies – like TikTok – have an incredible amount of access and control over our data and the information supply chain. Americans deserve to know if their personal information is safe, and to what extent it is being accessible by the CCP.

It is our duty to uphold American values like free speech and ensure the U.S. continues to lead in cutting edge technology to beat China. That starts by establishing a national privacy and data security framework and holding Big Tech accountable. I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today and I yield back.