

October 22, 2021

Written Testimony of Congressman Rick Crawford of Arkansas's First Congressional District
House Committee on the Judiciary
Member Day Hearing

I write today to bring attention to and underscore a couple of initiatives and concerns that I have been particularly keen on addressing.

Above all, one of the United States' main adversaries is the growing power and influence of Big Tech. Obviously, Big Tech and social media has propelled the partisan divide we are seeing today in our federal government and in our society. It is not the only source, but it is nonetheless a powerful source where access to information is skewed and questionable. This is all the more true as Big Tech gatekeepers are increasingly threatening Americans' access to quality local journalism. Not only are large platforms such as Google, Facebook, and Twitter posing major threats to advertising revenues, they exert power over what internet users access and how advertisers reach them.

Local radio and TV stations invest significant resources to keep Americans informed about critical events nationally, and within their local communities. Local media outlets provide firsthand accounts through investigative journalism and factual reporting to provide the most trusted news to communities. In the age of misinformation, this proves an important utility to Americans that are wary of the type of information we disseminate on mainstream media outlets and social media platforms.

Local media broadcasters rely almost entirely on advertising revenues to produce and support local news. Tech giants exert incredible influence on what online content is eligible to be monetized. Big Tech also controls the share of revenue they retain from content providers, who end up bearing the costs of producing the quality journalism that financially benefits Big Tech. Local broadcasters lose nearly \$2 billion annually in advertising revenue by providing content to Google and Facebook news searches alone.

It is not only financially that local broadcasters are affected by Big Tech, but they are also affected by Big Tech algorithms that change search results, favor certain news sources, and steer readers toward controversial, politically motivated content instead of factual journalism. Additionally, Big Tech closing in on local journalism, causing many to be bought out, merge, or run out of business, undoubtedly cripples the job market.

There is little power to negotiate with Big Tech for local broadcasters because the choice remains between publishing their content on large media outlets to hundreds of millions of consumers or be left to rot. Big Tech's own advertising revenue in the world space is sufficient to be able to negotiate advertising revenue shares with local media outlets and help keep them afloat. That is why I support H.R. 1735, the Journalism Competition and Preservation Act (JCPA) to create a four-year safe harbor from antitrust laws for print, broadcast, or digital news

companies to collectively negotiate with Big Tech regarding the terms on which the local news outlets' content may be distributed by online content distributors.

Personally, I have a background in agri-news reporting and broadcasting before getting into politics. When Big Tech wins, local communities lose. The JCPA will go a long way to preserving these important local media outlets while cutting back on the rising influence of Big Tech and their lack of empathy for misinformation and their global dominance over the content we view.

Another pressing issue before the Committee today is the national security crisis at our southern border. It is unfathomable that an all-time high of over 1.7 million apprehensions have already been made at the U.S.-Mexico border this year, but the Biden Administration continues to neglect its responsibilities. We must start chipping away at the border crisis, as it is a national security crisis as much as it is an immigration law and processing crisis.

Millions of Americans have entered the country the legal way and endured the grueling process to become American citizens. I recognize that our immigration system is broken and backlogged by its own inefficiency. Currently there are over 1.4 million pending cases in immigration court that each take an average of just over a year to be processed. We spend a little over \$3 billion per year on detention centers. This results in immigration courts weighed down by compounding cases and exorbitant amounts of taxpayer dollars used to sustain defendants as they wait in line to become American citizens.

We must address and fix this backlog, specifically beginning with the capacity of USCIS processing. Because immigration courts are Article I courts, the Attorney General has the authority to change entry requirements at a moment's notice. Therefore, Congress and the AG must work to solidify a process with clearer entry requirements and to afford USCIS and the immigration courts the resources to work more diligently.

Immigration law certainly is complicated, but it doesn't have to be. If there was a succinct system to vet and review foreigners who wish to enter the U.S. and become citizens, it would likely reduce the number of immigrants attempting to cross the border illegally. Until we receive President Biden and the Democrats' commitments to work with Republicans on this issue, while concurrently addressing the national security crisis at our southern border, our immigration courts and processing standards will remain backlogged and broken.

The issues of Big Tech influence and the national security crisis at our southern border and in our immigration courts, are some of the most important issues facing our nation today, and I remain committed to working with the Committee and my colleagues on solving these issues for the betterment of all Americans. These issues are contentious, but they don't have to be.

I thank you for allowing this submission of testimony.