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Trump also tried to suppress free speech on Twitter

By Brad Polumbo

February 9, 2023 7:32 pm



Over the last several months, many on the Right have raised the alarm over the disturbing revelations, made via Elon Musk's [release](#) of the Twitter Files, that Twitter worked closely with the federal government to censor Americans' online speech. From obscure government agencies to the FBI, federal bureaucrats evidently worked directly with the platform to request or demand the removal of speech they disliked. That's a serious violation of free speech principles and raises grave First Amendment concerns to boot.

But it's apparently not just conservative speech that was targeted by liberal federal employees. A House Oversight Committee hearing this week revealed that former President Donald Trump's White House apparently contacted Twitter to ask that negative tweets about him be removed.

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Here's what we learned.

Former Twitter U.S. Safety Policy Team senior expert Anika Collier Navaroli testified before the committee and was asked about an infamous, profane anti-Trump tweet by the actor Chrissy Teigen. In September 2019, Teigen [tweeted](#) that Trump was a "p**** a** b****."

While certainly vulgar and not very classy, it's nonetheless well within the bounds of the First Amendment's protections for a citizen to cuss out their president. But Navaroli testified under oath that she recalled the Trump-era White House reaching out to Twitter and pushing for the tweet to be taken down.

"I do remember hearing that we received a request from the White House to make sure that we evaluated this tweet and that they wanted it to come down because it was a derogatory statement directed toward the president," she said in response to a line of questioning from Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA).

"They wanted it to come down? They made that request?" Connolly asked.

"To my recollection, yes," she responded.

"I thought that was an inappropriate action by a government official, let alone the White House ... my, my, my" Connolly replied.

This was then confirmed with Navaroli again during questioning by Rep. Maxwell Frost (D-FL).

So, unless Navaroli is risking criminal penalties and perjuring herself over a random 2019 celebrity tweet – what incentive there is for her to do so is entirely unclear – it sure seems Trump's White House did try to crack down on mean things said about him on Twitter.

And it seemingly wasn't a one-time thing. *Rolling Stone* [says](#) multiple former Trump and Twitter officials told the outlet, "[The] Teigen tweet demand was hardly an isolated incident: The Trump administration and its allied Republicans in Congress routinely asked Twitter to take down posts they objected to – the exact behavior that they're claiming makes President Biden, the Democrats, and Twitter complicit in an anti-free speech conspiracy to muzzle conservatives online."

With these revelations in mind, it's worth revisiting what Republicans have had to say about similar instances where the government lobbied Twitter to suppress speech it dislikes.

For example, Sen. Josh Hawley (R-MO) [said](#) the Biden White House's requests made it "the most dangerously anti-free speech administration in American history."

Meanwhile, Rep. Jim Jordan (R-OH) [tweeted](#), “Democrats think it’s ok for Big Tech to censor speech. But Real America supports free speech.” He elsewhere [called](#) collusion between the government and Big Tech to suppress speech an “attack on the First Amendment.”

These are just a few of the countless examples. And they’re not wrong. But this outrage should be directed equally at Trump’s actions if Republican politicians actually care about free speech and the First Amendment.

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