

Statement of Congressman Doug Collins  
Subcommittee on Antitrust, Commercial and Administrative Law  
Hearing on “Online Platforms and Market Power, Part 2: Innovation and  
Entrepreneurship”  
Tuesday, July 16, 2019

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Thank you, Chairman Cicilline and Ranking Member Sensenbrenner for holding this hearing.

Innovation and competition in the tech sector have produced so much value for consumers it is hard to imagine going through a day without benefitting from access to online platforms and digital devices. It should be clear to everyone tech companies not only form a critical part of our economy — they represent some of America’s best innovation.

The companies at our hearing today have in fact been so effective at innovation they have become some of the biggest companies in the world. To some that is a cause of concern, so they’ve proposed breaking up these companies.

But companies that offer new innovations, better solutions, and more consumer benefit at lower prices often become big to the benefit of society. What is more, big online platforms often provide a gateway through which other companies — including countless small companies — can better reach their own consumers.

As I stressed when this subcommittee launched its investigation of competition in the tech sector, big is not necessarily bad. We shouldn't endeavor to punish successful innovators just because their success enables them to become big. We must instead determine, first, whether true harms in an antitrust sense are occurring in the tech sector and second, if so, whether the existing antitrust laws are adequate to address them.

I hope today's hearing will focus on ways we can encourage both innovation and competition, and both success and growth. These things are not mutually exclusive but usually go hand in hand — to the benefit of consumers and the advancement of our economy.

If during our inquiry, we identify on a bipartisan basis ways in which it is clear the antitrust laws should be modernized to meet challenges in the digital economy, this will have been a productive hearing. It will also be productive if we shed light on this topic only to find the antitrust laws as written are up to the task. Once we know that, we will be better able — on a bipartisan basis — to encourage the antitrust agencies to enforce those laws as needed.

Finally, scoping out from the topic of today's hearing, there are two other issues I hope we can address during the broader course of our investigation.

Almost all online engagement by individuals and businesses today runs through a few large platforms. When it comes to online communication, therefore, the platforms must be careful in how their businesses affect free expression.

When it comes to online commerce, these platforms must be careful they are not putting consumers at increased risk of harm or facilitating illicit conduct.

These expression and conduct issues raise different challenges that should not be conflated, but both issues can and should be discussed. As part of these discussions, we should consider if platforms' business models give them less incentive than other companies to exert the requisite amount of care, yet be subject to a lower expectation of accountability.

I hope today we have a productive conversation with some of the most successful companies and innovators in the world, as well as with the experts from academia and the legal community who have generously agreed to testify before us.

I look forward to the witnesses' testimony and yield back the balance of my time.