

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF RUMBLE FOUNDER AND CEO CHRIS PAVLOVSKI

Chairman Williams, Ranking Member Velazquez, and Members of the Committee: thank you for the opportunity to provide a statement on the alarming rise of government censorship and revenue interference by proxy on American small businesses.

My name is Chris Pavlovski, and I am the Chairman and CEO of Rumble. As a native of Toronto, Canada, I founded Rumble in 2013 as a platform for small and independent video content creators to express their opinions, own their narratives, build communities, and earn from their creations. Rumble entered the market as a welcomed alternative to incumbent platforms that were beholden to dominant creators and large corporations. That remains our role today, as our mission to protect a free and open internet is our North Star.

Our mission has resonated, as millions of users followed their favorite creators to our platform – with little to no paid advertising. These users came to Rumble because they, like us, believe that everyone benefits from a diverse marketplace of ideas, opinions, and dialogues. For example, Rumble saw an increase in 22.5 times the number of average monthly active users, from 1.6 million to 36 million from the third quarter of 2020 to the third quarter of 2021.

In September 2022, Rumble successfully went public, relocating our headquarters to the United States and trading on the NASDAQ under the ticker “RUM.” We diversified our video content into new verticals like sports, lifestyle, hip-hop, and video gaming. And in the spirit of American enterprise, we also introduced new businesses and patents under the Rumble brand, including the Rumble Advertising Center, Rumble Studio livestreaming software, and Rumble Cloud.

It’s hard to imagine a time and place in the United States where freedom of speech and freedom of expression are vilified rather than treasured as fundamental pillars of a democratic society. Freedom of speech has navigated this country through some of the most impactful social movements in history, including abolition, civil rights, women’s’ rights, and more.

The United States is not alone in revering these freedoms as cornerstones of democracy. Countries around the world have idolized freedoms of speech and expression as one of the most powerful tools to protest tyrannical governments and authoritarian societies. In fact, the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights reserves Article 19 for this, stating: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Unfortunately, today we see a large number of activists who attack these freedoms, sometimes under the guise of protecting democracy from “misinformation” or “disinformation.” These activists not only pressure Big Tech to censor information through algorithms and shadow banning, but now they have amplified their presence in online communities.

They attempt to intimidate advertisers into boycotting platforms that don’t comply with their worldview. They are crushing small business enterprise and entrepreneurialism, while simultaneously imposing their views on both individuals and businesses.

It is truly alarming that activists want to not only control what is shared online, but also control which platforms are deemed “responsible and trustworthy” all while controlling which businesses are allowed to make a profit. That sounds more like a page from George Orwell’s “1984” than a story from main street in America.

Rumble is not in the business of interfering with anyone's access to free information and ideas. While we have strict content policies in place that prohibit sexually explicit and terrorist-related content, among other things, we are not in the business of fact checking, nor should we be. More importantly, neither should the government.

Individuals have the ability to form their own opinions, express their own ideas, and access information freely. That's the principle that Rumble was founded upon and that's what we will always stand for. It is my hope that we will see other companies, especially those who connect audiences and distribute content, start to do the same.

However, there are some bad actors who only value free speech if it agrees with their own.

Media Matters is one example of a news outlet that published multiple articles about Rumble users, painting an unfair and distorted picture of who they are and what they consume. Our philosophy is that the right of expression should be protected, and for some reason Media Matters thinks that makes us part of the extreme right. What's ironic is the articles focused on single user or video, while our audience has consistently remained over 40 million average monthly active users since 2022 and we've seen billions of minutes of video uploaded.

What Media Matters hopes to achieve with dishonesty is to scare away potential advertisers and make them hesitant to work with the publishers offered through our ad exchange.

Despite these stories, independent, third-party data from Comscore, a global media measurement and analytics company, refutes the notion that Rumble is any sort of haven for extremists. Comscore's data revealed Rumble's audience in September of 2023 was 35.5 percent Democrat, 28.9 percent Independent, 21.8 percent Republican, and 12.6 percent no-affiliation. Not exactly what Media Matters would have you believe.

Thus far, activist attempts to deceive the public, scare advertisers, and impede Rumble's growth, have not stopped us. With our belief in our mission; our investments in our video, advertising, livestreaming, and cloud products; and our loyal users and creators, we cannot possibly fail. And because we've been valued as a multi-billion-dollar company since going public, we can better withstand the attacks.

But what will happen when "disinformation" activists target much smaller companies and ask advertisers to boycott them solely for their beliefs? How will a local town's newspaper with one editor and a slowing advertising business sustain the threats of an organized and well-funded activist campaign?

I applaud the efforts of Chairman Williams to bring into focus the funding of non-profits and non-governmental organizations that are supporting these activists. The only thing worse than the reality of this corporate activism hindering America's small business landscape, is the idea that the federal government could be behind it. We applaud the Chairman's recent subpoena to the State Department's Global Engagement Center and hope they will answer your questions about funding and that the leadership of this House will support you in doing so.

There is no room for censorship in America, whether that be in small business profits or online discourse. I am optimistic that this committee's work will put an end to this and I am proud that Rumble is the bastion of free speech. We will continue to protect this human right, from video, to advertising, to cloud services.

If you're not with us, and with free speech, you're on the wrong side of history.