

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Robert E. Latta
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
“Disinformation Nation: Social Media's Role in Promoting Extremism and
Misinformation”
March 25, 2020**

As Prepared for Delivery

Good morning to our witnesses, and welcome to this long overdue conversation with the Energy and Commerce Committee.

I am deeply concerned by your decisions to operate your companies in a vague and biased manner, with little to no accountability, while using Section 230 as a shield for your actions and their real-world consequences.

Your companies have the power to silence the President of the United States, shut off legitimate journalism in Australia, shut down legitimate scientific debate on a variety of issues, and dictate which articles or websites are seen by Americans when they search the Internet. When these actions are taken, users have little to

no recourse to appeal the decision—if they are aware of your actions. In most cases, we simply do not know.

What does this mean for everyday Americans?

We are all well aware of Big Tech’s ever increasing censorship of conservative voices and their commitment to serve the radical progressive agenda by influencing a generation of children and removing, shutting down, or cancelling any news, books, and, now, even toys that aren’t considered “woke.” This is fundamentally un-American.

At a recent hearing on disinformation and extremism online, Professor Turley, one of the nation’s foremost experts on Constitutional Law, testified about “the little brother problem”—a problem in which private entities do for the Government what it cannot legally do for itself. As of January of this year, Google has greater than 92%

market share in search, Facebook has over 2.7 billion monthly users, and Twitter has over 187 million daily users.

Your companies have enormous control over whose ideas are seen, read, or heard around the world. This gives you great power – and if misused, as we have seen in the recent years, your actions have ripple effects throughout the world that result in American voices being removed from the marketplace of ideas.

While the little brother problem of censorship is frightening enough, other serious harms are occurring on these platforms that affect ordinary Americans.

Young American children and teenagers are addicted, actually addicted, to their devices and social media. This problem has been exacerbated by the pandemic and will only get worse if children continue to be separated from

their peers and cannot learn from their teachers in a classroom.

Your platforms are purposely designed to keep our children hooked to their screens. The use of social media has been linked to increased rates of depression, mental illness, cyberbullying, and suicide among America's youth. Illegal drugs continue to be sold online despite your previous commitments to solve these issues [*Mr. Chairman, I would like to submit a letter from the National Association Boards of Pharmacy for the record*]. Serious problems continue to persist, and I wonder how much you are truly dedicating to combatting these actions.

What actions are you taking to educate Americans about the dangers of using your site? Especially the dangers for our kids?

As Ranking Member on the Subcommittee for Communications and Technology, we have oversight over any change made to Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. Section 230 provides you with liability protection for content moderation decisions made in “good faith”. Based on recent actions, however, it is clear that your definition of “good faith” moderation includes censoring viewpoints you disagree with and establishing a faux independent appeals process that does not make its content moderation decisions based on American principles of free expression. I find that highly concerning.

I look at today’s hearing as an important step in reconsidering the extent to which Big Tech deserves to retain their significant liability protection.

I yield back.