



Internet Association

September 4, 2018

The Honorable Richard Burr
Chairman
Senate Select Committee on Intelligence
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mark Warner
Ranking Member
Senate Select Committee on Intelligence
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Open Hearing: Foreign Influence Operations' Use of Social Media Platforms

Dear Senators Burr and Warner:

As conservatives and the leaders of major associations that represent the technology industry, we write to you to express our concerns about congressional leaders embracing the notion of political bias on various social media platforms and websites. We strongly reject this notion. These accusations are not borne out by data and facts, and they have been widely discredited by major news organizations and experts.

The idea of Conservative – or Progressive – bias on these platforms is simply not true. The platforms themselves don't have a political ideology and it would make no business sense for companies to stifle the speech of half their customers. Conservative voices thrive on social media, which has allowed new ideas, once outside the mainstream, to rise to the top. Compared to any other form of communication, internet companies offer the most open and accessible platforms for all Americans.

The technology sector is a made-in-America economic success story. It is the envy of the world, boasts a large trade surplus, and employs millions of Americans. Internet companies enable competition and innovation from American start-ups and small businesses that can access customers across the globe at the click of a mouse. Over 40 percent of the world's unicorn companies – privately held start-ups valued at over \$1 billion – were born in the United States. Internet companies have been vital to unleashing innovation and driving economic growth.

As we've seen on both sides of the aisle, as well as in apolitical spaces, social media platforms function as crucial organizing tools. They have been effective in serving the public during tragedy. For example, in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, Texans used Twitter and Facebook to spread important safety information and direct First Responders to citizens in need of aid.

America faces mounting threats on a wide variety of technological fronts from our geopolitical rivals – Russia, China, and as was recently reported Iran. These are serious issues that will only mount in the coming decades. That should be our primary focus, as it is critical to both our national security and the future of our democracy. We urge you to focus on these vital issues and see no legitimate avenue for a legislative response on political bias.

Thank you for taking the time to hear our concerns.

Sincerely,

/s/Chip Pickering
Chip Pickering, CEO
INCOMPAS

/s/Gary Shapiro
Gary Shapiro, President and CEO
Consumer Technology Association

/s/Michael Beckerman
Michael Beckerman, President and CEO
Internet Association