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6 TWITTER: TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

7 WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2018

8 House of Representatives

9 Committee on Energy and Commerce

10 Washington, D.C.

11

12

13

14 The committee met, pursuant to call, at 1:30 p.m., in Room  
15 2123 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Greg Walden [chairman  
16 of the committee] presiding.

17 Members present: Representatives Walden, Barton, Upton,  
18 Shimkus, Burgess, Scalise, Latta, McMorris Rodgers, Harper,  
19 Lance, Guthrie, Olson, McKinley, Kinzinger, Griffith, Bilirakis,  
20 Johnson, Long, Bucshon, Flores, Brooks, Mullin, Hudson, Collins,  
21 Cramer, Walberg, Walters, Costello, Carter, Duncan, Pallone,  
22 Rush, Engel, Green, DeGette, Doyle, Schakowsky, Butterfield,

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23 Matsui, Castor, Sarbanes, McNerney, Welch, Lujan, Tonko, Clarke,  
24 Loeb sack, Schrader, Kennedy, Cardenas, Ruiz, Peters, and Dingell.

25

26 Staff present: Jon Adame, Policy Coordinator,  
27 Communications & Technology; Jennifer Barblan, Chief Counsel,  
28 Oversight & Investigations; Mike Bloomquist, Deputy Staff  
29 Director; Karen Christian, General Counsel; Robin Colwell, Chief  
30 Counsel, Communications & Technology; Jordan Davis, Director of  
31 Policy and External Affairs; Melissa Froelich, Chief Counsel,  
32 Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection; Adam Fromm, Director  
33 of Outreach and Coalitions; Ali Fulling, Legislative Clerk,  
34 Oversight & Investigations, Digital Commerce and Consumer  
35 Protection; Elena Hernandez, Press Secretary; Zach Hunter,  
36 Director of Communications; Paul Jackson, Professional Staff,  
37 Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection; Peter Kielty, Deputy  
38 General Counsel; Bijan Koohmaraie, Counsel, Digital Commerce and  
39 Consumer Protection; Tim Kurth, Senior Professional Staff,  
40 Communications & Technology; Milly Lothian, Press Assistant and  
41 Digital Coordinator; Mark Ratner, Policy Coordinator; Austin  
42 Stonebraker, Press Assistant; Madeline Vey, Policy Coordinator,  
43 Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection; Jessica Wilkerson,  
44 Professional Staff, Oversight & Investigations; Greg Zerzan,

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45 Counsel, Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection; Michelle Ash,  
46 Minority Chief Counsel, Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection;  
47 Jeff Carroll, Minority Staff Director; Jennifer Epperson,  
48 Minority FCC Detailee; Evan Gilbert, Minority Press Assistant;  
49 Lisa Goldman, Minority Counsel; Tiffany Guarascio, Minority  
50 Deputy Staff Director and Chief Health Advisor; Carolyn Hann,  
51 Minority FTC Detailee; Alex Hoehn-Saric, Minority Chief Counsel,  
52 Communications and Technology; Jerry Leverich, Minority Counsel;  
53 Jourdan Lewis, Minority Staff Assistant; Dan Miller, Minority  
54 Policy Analyst; Caroline Paris-Behr, Minority Policy Analyst;  
55 Kaitlyn Peel, Minority Digital Director; Andrew Souvall, Minority  
56 Director of Communications, Outreach and Member Services; and  
57 C.J. Young, Minority Press Secretary.

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58           The Chairman. The Committee on Energy and Commerce will  
59 now come to order. The chair now recognizes himself for five  
60 minutes for purposes of an opening statement.

61           Good afternoon, and thank you, Mr. Dorsey, for being before  
62 the Energy and Commerce Committee today.

63           The company you and your co-creators founded 12 years ago  
64 has become one of the most recognizable businesses in the world.

65  
66           Twitter has reached that rarified place where using the  
67 service has become a verb, instantly recognized around the globe.

68           Just as people can Google a question or Gram a photo, everyone  
69 knows what it means to tweet one's thoughts or ideas.

70           The list of superlatives to describe Twitter certainly  
71 exceeds 280 characters. It is one of the most downloaded apps  
72 in the world, one of the most visited websites.

73           It is one of the world's premier sources for breaking news.  
74 Its power and reach are so great that society-changing events  
75 like the Arab Spring have been dubbed the Twitter Revolution.

76           The service allows anyone with access to the internet the  
77 power to broadcast his or her views to the world. It's truly  
78 revolutionary in the way that the Gutenberg press was  
79 revolutionary.

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80           It helps set information free. It allows ideas to propagate  
81 and challenge established ways of thinking. Twitter's success  
82 and growth rate has been extraordinary but it is not without  
83 controversy.

84           The service has been banned at various times and in various  
85 countries, such as China and Iran. Here in the United States  
86 the company itself has come under criticism for impeding the  
87 ability of some users to post information, remove tweets, and  
88 other content moderation practices.

89           For instance, in July it was reported that some politically  
90 prominent users were no longer appearing as auto-populated  
91 options in certain search results.

92           This led to concerns that the service might be, quote,  
93 unquote, "shadow banning" some users in an attempt to limit their  
94 visibility on the site.

95           Now, this was hardly the first instance of a social media  
96 service taking actions which appeared to minimize or de-emphasize  
97 certain viewpoints, and in the most recent case, Twitter has  
98 stated that the action were not intentional but, rather, the  
99 result of algorithms designed to maintain a more civil tone on  
100 the site.

101           Twitter is also -- Twitter has also direction the issue of

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102 "bots," or automated accounts, not controlled by one person.  
103 Even the removal of these bots from the service raise questions  
104 about how the bots were identified because the number of followers  
105 someone has on Twitter has real economic value in our economy.

106 We recognize the complexity of trying to manage your service,  
107 which posts over half a million tweets a day. I believe you were  
108 once temporarily suspended from Twitter due to an internal error  
109 yourself.

110 We do not want to lose sight of a few fundamental facts.  
111 Humans are building the algorithms, humans are making decisions  
112 about how to implement Twitter's terms of service, and humans  
113 are recommending changes to Twitter's policies.

114 Humans can make mistakes. Now, Twitter manages those  
115 circumstances as critically important in an environment where  
116 algorithms to decide what we see in our home feed, ads, and search  
117 suggestions on.

118 It is critical that users are confident that you're living  
119 up to your own promises. According to Twitter rules, the company  
120 believes that everyone should have the power to create and share  
121 ideas and information instantly without barriers.

122 Well, that's a noble mission and one that as a private company  
123 you certainly do not have to take on. The fact that you have

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124 done so as enriched the world, changed societies, and given an  
125 outlet to voices that might otherwise never be heard.

126 We, and the American people, want to be reassured that you're  
127 continuing to live up to that mission. We hope you can help us  
128 better understand how Twitter decides when to suspend a user or  
129 ban them from the service and what you do to ensure that such  
130 decisions are made without undue bias.

131 We hope you can help us better understand what role automated  
132 algorithms have in this process and how those algorithms are  
133 designed to ensure consistent outcomes and a fair process.

134 The company that you and your co-founders created plays an  
135 instrumental role in sharing news and information across the  
136 globe. We appreciate your willingness to appear before us to  
137 today and to answer our questions.

138 With that, I yield back the balance of my time and recognize  
139 Mr. Pallone from New Jersey for an opening statement.

140 Mr. Pallone. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

141 Over the past few weeks, President Trump and many Republicans  
142 have peddled conspiracy theories about Twitter and other social  
143 media platforms to with up their base and fund raise.

144 I fear the Republicans are using this hearing for those  
145 purposes instead of addressing the serious issues raised by social

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146 media platforms that affect Americans' everyday lives.

147           Twitter is a valuable platform for disseminating news,  
148 information, and viewpoints. It can be a tool for bringing people  
149 together and allows one to reach many.

150           In places like Iran and Ukraine, Twitter was used to organize  
151 and give voice to the concerns of otherwise voiceless individuals.

152           Closer to home, Twitter and hashtags like #StayWoke, #MeToo,  
153 and #NetNeutrality have fostered important conversations and  
154 supported larger social movements that are changing our society.

155           But Twitter has a darker side. Far too many Twitter users  
156 still face bullying and trolling attacks. Tweets designed to  
157 threaten, belittle, demean, and silence individuals can have a  
158 devastating effect, sometimes even driving people to suicide,  
159 and while Twitter has taken some steps to protect users and enable  
160 reporting, more needs to be done.

161           Bad actors have co-opted Twitter and other social media  
162 platforms to spread disinformation and sow divisions in our  
163 society.

164           For example, Alex Jones used Twitter to amplify harmful and  
165 dangerous lies such as those regarding the Sandy Hook Elementary  
166 School shooting.

167           Other have used the platform to deny the existence of the

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168 Holocaust, disseminate racial supremacy theories, and spread  
169 false information about terrorism, natural disasters, and more.

170 When questioned about this disinformation, Twitter's CEO,  
171 Jack Dorsey, said the truth will win out in the end. But there  
172 is reason to doubt that, in my opinion.

173 According to a recent study published by the MIT Media Lab,  
174 false rumors on Twitter traveled, and I quote, "farther, faster,  
175 deeper, and more broadly than the truth, with true claims taking  
176 about six times as long to reach the same number of people," and  
177 that's dangerous.

178 And countries like Russia and Iran are taking advantage of  
179 this to broadly disseminate propaganda and false information.

180 Beyond influencing elections, foreign agents are actively  
181 trying to turn groups of Americans against each other and these  
182 countries are encouraging conflict to sow division and hatred  
183 by targeting topics that generate intense feelings such as race,  
184 religion, and politics.

185 Unfortunately, the actions of President Trump have made the  
186 situation worse. Repeatedly, the president uses Twitter to bully  
187 and belittle people, calling them names like dog, clown, spoiled  
188 brat, son of a bitch, enemies, and loser.

189 He routinely tweets false statements designed to mislead

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190 Americans and foster discord, and the president's actions coarsen  
191 the public debate and feed distrust within our society.

192 President Trump has demonstrated that the politics of  
193 division are good for fund raising and rousing his base and, sadly,  
194 Republicans are now following his lead instead of criticizing  
195 the president for behavior that would not be tolerated even from  
196 a child.

197 As reported in the news, the Trump campaign and the  
198 Republican majority leader have used the supposed  
199 anti-conservative bias online to fund raise.

200 This hearing appears to be just one more mechanism to raise  
201 money and generate outrage, and it appears Republicans are  
202 desperately trying to rally the base by fabricating a problem  
203 that simply does not exist.

204 Regardless of the Republicans' intentions for this hearing,  
205 Twitter and other social media platforms must do more to regain  
206 and maintain the public trust. Bullying, the spread of  
207 disinformation and malicious foreign influence continue.

208 Twitter policies have been inconsistent and confusing. The  
209 company's enforcement seems to chase the latest headline as  
210 opposed to addressing systematic problems.

211 Though Twitter and other social media platforms must

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212 establish clear policies to address the problems discussed today,  
213 provide tools to users and then swiftly and fairly enforce those  
214 policies, and those policies should apply equally to the  
215 president, politicians, administration officials, celebrities,  
216 and the teenager down the street.

217           It's long past time for Twitter and other social media  
218 companies to stop allowing their platforms to be tools of discord  
219 of spreading false information and of foreign government  
220 manipulation.

221           So I thank you for having the hearing, Mr. Chairman, and  
222 I yield back.

223           The Chairman. I thank the gentleman.

224           The chair now recognizes Mr. Dorsey for purposes of an  
225 opening statement. We appreciate your being here and feel free  
226 to go ahead.

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227 STATEMENT OF JACK DORSEY, CEO, TWITTER, INC.

228

229 Mr. Dorsey. Thank you.

230 Thank you, Chairman Walden, Ranking Member Pallone, and the  
231 committee for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Twitter to  
232 the American people.

233 I look forward to our conversation about our commitment to  
234 impartiality, to transparency, and to accountability.

235 If it's okay with all of you, I'd like to read you something  
236 I personally wrote as I thought about these issues. I am also  
237 going to tweet it out right now.

238 I want to start by making something very clear. We don't  
239 consider political viewpoints, perspectives, or party  
240 affiliation in any of our policies or enforcement decisions,  
241 period.

242 Impartiality is our guiding principle. Let me explain why.  
243 We believe many people use Twitter as a digital public square.

244

245 They gather from all around the world to see what's happening  
246 and have a conversation about what they see. Twitter cannot  
247 rightly serve as public square if it's constructed around the  
248 personal opinions of its makers.

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249           We believe a key driver of a thriving public square is the  
250 fundamental human right of freedom of opinion and expression.

251           Our early and strong defense of open and free exchange has  
252 enabled Twitter to be the platform for activists, marginalized  
253 communities, whistle blowers, journalists, governments, and the  
254 most influential people around the world. Twitter will always  
255 default to open and free exchange.

256           A default to free expression left unchecked can generate  
257 risks and dangers for people. It's important Twitter  
258 distinguishes between people's opinions and their behaviors and  
259 disarms behavior intending to silence another person or adversely  
260 interfere with their universal human rights.

261           We build our policies and rules with the principle of  
262 impartiality, objective criteria rather than on the basis of bias,  
263 prejudice, or preferring the benefit to one person over another  
264 for improper reasons.

265           If we learn we failed to create impartial outcomes, we  
266 immediately work to fix. In the spirit of accountability and  
267 transparency, recently we failed our intended impartiality.

268           Our algorithms were unfairly filtering 600,000 accounts,  
269 including some members of Congress, from our search auto complete  
270 and latest results. We fixed it, but how did it happen?

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271 Our technology was using a decision-making criteria that  
272 considers the behavior of people following these accounts. We  
273 decided that wasn't fair and we corrected it.

274 We will always improve our technology and algorithms to drive  
275 healthier usage and measure the impartiality of those outcomes.

276 Bias in algorithms is an important topic. Our  
277 responsibility is to understand, measure, and reduce accidental  
278 bias due to factors such as the quality of the data used to train  
279 our algorithms. This is an extremely complex challenge facing  
280 everyone applying artificial intelligence.

281 For our part, machine-learning teams at Twitter are  
282 experimenting with these techniques in developing roadmaps to  
283 ensure present and future machine-learning models uphold a high  
284 standard when it comes to algorithmic fairness.

285 It's an important step towards ensuring impartiality.  
286 Looking at the data, we analyzed tweets sent by all members of  
287 the House and Senate and found no statistically significant  
288 difference between the number of times a tweet by a Democrat is  
289 viewed versus a Republican, even after all of our ranking and  
290 filtering of tweets has been applied.

291 Also, there is a distinction we need to make clear. When  
292 people follow you, you've earned that audience and we have a

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293 responsibility to make sure they can see your tweets. We do not  
294 have a responsibility nor you a right to amplify your tweets to  
295 an audience that doesn't follow you.

296 What our algorithms decide to show in shared spaces like  
297 search results is based on thousands of signals that constant  
298 learn and evolve over time.

299 Some of those signals are engagement. Some are the number  
300 of abuse reports. We balance all of these to prevent gaming our  
301 system.

302 We acknowledge the growing concern people have of the power  
303 held by companies like Twitter. We believe it's dangerous to  
304 ask Twitter to regulate opinions or be the arbiter of truth.

305 We'd rather be judged by the impartiality of outcomes and  
306 criticized when we fail this principle.

307 In closing, when I think of our work, I think of my mom and  
308 dad in St. Louis, a Democrat and a Republican. We had lots of  
309 frustrating and -- frustrating and heated debates. But looking  
310 back, I appreciate I was able to hear and challenge different  
311 perspectives and I also appreciate I felt safe to do so.

312 We believe Twitter helps people connect to something bigger  
313 than themselves, show all the amazing things that are happening  
314 in the world, and all the things we need to acknowledge and

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315 address.

316 We are constantly learning how to make it freer and healthier  
317 for all to participate.

318 Thank you, all.

319 [The prepared statement of Mr. Dorsey follows:]

320 \*\*\*\*\*INSERT 1\*\*\*\*\*



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321 The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Dorsey.

322 We'll now begin the opportunity to have questions and I will  
323 lead off.

324 So, Mr. Dorsey, I am going to get straight to the heart of  
325 why we are here today. We have a lot of questions about Twitter's  
326 business practices including questions about your algorithms,  
327 content management practices, and how Section 230's safe harbors  
328 protect Twitter.

329 In many ways, for some of us, it seems a little bit like  
330 the Wizard of Oz -- we want to know what's going on behind the  
331 curtain.

332 This summer, reports surfaced that profiles of prominent  
333 Republican Twitter users were not appearing in automatically  
334 populated drop-down search results. I think you mentioned that  
335 in your own testimony.

336 This was after a member of this committee had her tweets  
337 and ads taken off the service because of a basic conservative  
338 message, and then there are other examples that have been sent  
339 our way.

340 Twitter's public response is, and I quote, "We do not shadow  
341 ban." You're always able to see the tweets from accounts you  
342 follow, although you may have to, quote, "do more work to find

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343 them like go directly to their profile," closed quote.

344 But to most people, they might think of that as shadow  
345 banning. It doesn't matter what your definition of shadow  
346 banning is when the expectation you are given to your users who  
347 choose to follow certain accounts is different from what they  
348 see on their time line and in their searches.

349 In one example of many, certain prominent conservative users  
350 including some of our colleagues who have come to us --  
351 Representatives Meadows, Jordan, Gaetz -- were not shown in the  
352 automatically populated drop-down searches on Twitter, correct?

353 Out of the more than 300 million active Twitter users, why  
354 did this only happen to certain accounts? In other words, what  
355 did the algorithm take into account that led to prominent  
356 conservatives, including members of the U.S. House of  
357 Representatives, not being included in auto search suggestions?  
358 What caused that?

359 Mr. Dorsey. Thank you for the question.

360 So we use signals, usually hundreds of signals, to determine  
361 and to decide what to show, what to down rank, or, potentially,  
362 what to filter.

363 In this particular case, as I mentioned in my opening, we  
364 were using a signal of the behavior of the people following

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365 accounts and we didn't believe, upon further consideration and  
366 also seeing the impact, which was about 600,000 accounts -- a  
367 pretty broad base -- that that was ultimately fair and we decided  
368 to correct it.

369 We also decided that it was not fair to use a signal for  
370 filtering in general and we decided to correct that within search  
371 as well.

372 And it is important for us to, one, be able to experiment  
373 freely with the signals and to have the -- to have the freedom  
374 to be able to inject them and also to remove them because that's  
375 the only way we are going to learn.

376 We will make mistakes along the way and the way we want to  
377 be judged is making sure that we recognize those and that we  
378 correct them, and what we are looking in terms -- for in terms  
379 of whether we made a mistake or not is this principle of  
380 impartiality and, specifically, impartial outcomes, and we  
381 realized that in this particular case and within search that we  
382 weren't driving that and we could have done a better job there.

383 The Chairman. Let me ask you another question. Could bots  
384 game the system or work to block or silence certain voices,  
385 political or otherwise?

386 Mr. Dorsey. We are always looking for patterns of behavior

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387 intending to amplify information artificially and that  
388 information could include actions like blocking.

389 So that's why it's important that we don't just use one signal  
390 but we use hundreds of signals and that we balance them  
391 accordingly.

392 There is a perception that a simple report of a term -- of  
393 a violation of the terms of service will result in action or down  
394 ranking. That is not true. It is one signal that we use and  
395 weigh according to other signals that we see across.

396 The Chairman. I have one final question. I asked followers  
397 of Twitter -- Twitter followers I have and one from Oregon asked  
398 why Twitter relies exclusively on users to report violations.

399 Mr. Dorsey. This is a matter of scale. So today, in order  
400 to remove tweets or to remove accounts, we do require a report  
401 of the violating and that report is reviewed by an individual.

402 Those reports are prioritized based on the severity of the  
403 report. So death threats have a higher prioritization of all  
404 others and we take action on them much faster.

405 We do have algorithms that are constantly proactively  
406 searching the network and, specifically, the behaviors on the  
407 network and filtering and down ranking accordingly.

408 And what that means in terms of filtering is it might filter

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409 behind an interstitial. An interstitial is a graphic or element  
410 within our app or service that one can tap to see more tweets  
411 or show more replies.

412 So in some cases, we are proactively, based on these  
413 algorithms, hiding some of the content, causing a little bit more  
414 friction to actually see it and, again, those are models that  
415 we constantly learn from and evolve as well.

416 The Chairman. My time has expired.

417 I now recognize the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Pallone.

418 Mr. Pallone. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

419 Twitter's effect on American society raise genuine and  
420 serious issues. But that's not why the Republican majority has  
421 called you here today, Mr. Dorsey.

422 I think it's the height of hypocrisy that President Trump  
423 and congressional Republicans criticize Twitter for supposed  
424 liberal bias when President Trump uses the platform every day  
425 for his juvenile tweets and spreading lies and misinformation  
426 to the whole country and to the world.

427 In my opinion, you have an obligation to ensure your  
428 platform, at a minimum, does no harm to our country or democracy  
429 and the American public.

430 And as I noted in my opening, one persistent critique of

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431 Twitter by civil rights advocates and victims of abuse and others  
432 is that your policies are unevenly enforced.

433 The rich and powerful get special treatment. Others get  
434 little recourse when Twitter fails to protect them unless the  
435 company gets some bad press.

436 Now, you have admitted that Twitter needs to do a better  
437 job explaining how decisions are made, especially those by human  
438 content moderators who handle the most difficult and sensitive  
439 questions.

440 So let me just ask you, how many human content moderators  
441 does Twitter employ in the U.S. and how much do they get paid?

442 Mr. Dorsey. We -- so we want to think about this problem  
443 not in terms of the number of people but how we make decisions  
444 to invest in building new technologies versus hiring folks.

445 Mr. Pallone. Well, let me ask you these three questions  
446 on this point and then if you can't answer it I would appreciate  
447 it if you can't -- through the chairman if you could get back  
448 to us.

449 The first one was how many human content moderators does  
450 Twitter employ in the U.S. and how much do they get paid, second,  
451 how many hours of training is given to them to ensure consistency  
452 in their decisions, and last, are they given specific instructions

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453 to ensure that celebrities and politicians are treated the same  
454 as everyone else.

455 If you can answer -- otherwise, I am going to ask you to  
456 get back to us in writing because I --

457 Mr. Dorsey. We'll follow up with you on specific numbers.  
458 But on the last point, this is a very important distinction.  
459 I do believe that we need to do more around protecting private  
460 individuals than public figures.

461 I don't know yet exactly how that will manifest. But I do  
462 believe it's important that we extend the protection of our rules  
463 more to private individuals necessarily than public figures.

464 Mr. Pallone. Well, I appreciate that, because I think  
465 everyone should be treated the same and you seem to be saying  
466 that. But we have to make sure that the enforcement mechanism  
467 is there so that's true.

468 Let me -- let me ask, if you could report back to the committee  
469 within one month of what steps Twitter is taking to improve the  
470 consistency of its enforcement and the metrics that demonstrate  
471 improvement, if you could, within a month. Is that okay?

472 Mr. Dorsey. Absolutely.

473 Mr. Pallone. All right.

474 Now, let me turn to another issue. I only have a minute.

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475 Other technology companies like Airbnb and Facebook have  
476 committed to conducting civil rights audits amid concerns raised  
477 by members of the Congressional Black Caucus and others including  
478 Representatives Rush to my left, Butterfield, and Clarke on our  
479 committee, and these audits seek to uncover how platforms and  
480 their policies have been used to stoke racial and religious  
481 resentment or violence, and given the sometimes dangerous use  
482 of your platform and the haphazard approach of Twitter towards  
483 developing and enforcing its policies, I think your company should  
484 take similar action.

485 So let me ask these three questions and, again, if you can  
486 answer them. If not, please get back to us within the month.

487  
488 Will you commit to working with an independent third-party  
489 institution to conduct a civil rights audit of Twitter? Yes or  
490 no.

491 Mr. Dorsey. We will, and we do do that on a regular basis  
492 with what's called our Trust and Safety Council, which --

493 Mr. Pallone. All right. But I mean, I would like -- asking  
494 for an independent third party institution to conduct it.

495 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. Let us follow up with you on that.

496 Mr. Pallone. All right.

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497           Second, will you commit -- let me ask these two together  
498 -- will you commit to making the results of all such audits  
499 available to the public including all recommendations and  
500 findings?

501           Mr. Dorsey. Yes. We do believe we need a lot more  
502 transparency around our actions and our decisions --

503           Mr. Pallone. All right.

504           Then the third one, Mr. Chairman, with your permission, will  
505 you commit, based on the findings of all such audits to change  
506 Twitter's policies, programs and processes to address these areas  
507 of concern? Yes or no.

508           Mr. Dorsey. We are always looking to evolve our policies  
509 based on what we find, so yes.

510           Mr. Pallone. All right.

511           And again, Mr. Chairman, through you, if we could get a report  
512 back to the committee within one month of the steps that Mr. Dorsey  
513 is taking, I would appreciate it.

514           Mr. Dorsey. Thank you.

515           The Chairman. All right. Thank you.

516           I now turn to Mr. Upton, former chairman of the committee,  
517 for questions.

518           Mr. Upton. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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519           So, Mr. Dorsey, I think it's fair to say that even looking  
520 at my Twitter feed that there are some fairly ugly things on  
521 Twitter that come every now and then, and my name is Fred Upton  
522 and I got a bet that my initials are probably used more than just  
523 about any other.

524           [Laughter.]

525           Might even think that it's bipartisan on both sides of the  
526 aisle. But I would like to see civility brought back into the  
527 public discourse. In a July post, Twitter acknowledged that  
528 tweets from bad faith actors who intend to manipulate or divide  
529 the conversations should be ranked lower.

530           So the question is how do you determine whether a user is  
531 tweeting to manipulate or divide the conversation?

532           Mr. Dorsey. This is a great question and one that we have  
533 -- we've struggled with in the past. We recently determined that  
534 we needed something much more tangible and cohesive in order to  
535 think about this work and we've come across health as a concept.

536           And we've all had experiences where we felt we've been in  
537 a conversation that's a little bit more toxic and we wanted to  
538 walk away from it.

539           We've all been in conversations that felt really empowering  
540 and something that we are learning from and we want to stay in

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541 them.

542           So right now, we are trying to determine what the indicators  
543 of conversational health are and we are starting with four  
544 indicators.

545           One is what is the amount of shared attention that a  
546 conversation has. What percentage of the conversation is focused  
547 on the same things?

548           What is a percentage of shared facts that the conversation  
549 is having -- not whether the facts are true or false, but are  
550 we sharing the same facts. What percentage of the conversation  
551 is receptive?

552           And finally, is there a variety of perspective within the  
553 conversation or is it a filter bubble or echo chamber of the same  
554 sort of ideas?

555           So we are currently trying to figure out what those  
556 indicators of health are and to measure them and we intend not  
557 only to share what those indicators are that we've found but also  
558 to measure ourselves against it and make that public so we can  
559 show progress, because we don't believe we can really fix anything  
560 unless we can -- we can measure it and we are working with external  
561 parties to help us do that because we know we can't do this alone.

562           Mr. Upton. So do you believe that Twitter's rules are clear

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563 on what's allowed and what's not allowed on the platform?

564 Mr. Dorsey. I believe if you were to go to our rules today  
565 and sit down with a cup of coffee, you would not be able to  
566 understand it. I believe we need to do a much better job not  
567 only with those rules but with our terms of service. We need  
568 to make them a whole lot more approachable.

569 We would love to lead in this area and we are working on  
570 this. But I think there's a lot of -- I think there's a lot of  
571 confusion around our rules and also our enforcement and we intend  
572 to fix it.

573 Mr. Upton. The last question is can a Twitter user's friend  
574 or someone that they follow grant permission to access to that  
575 user's personal information to a third party?

576 Mr. Dorsey. No. We -- if you are sharing your password  
577 of your account with another, then they have the rights that you  
578 would have to take on with that account.

579 Mr. Upton. Yield back.

580 The Chairman. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from  
581 New York, Mr. Tonko.

582 Ms. DeGette is next. Okay. The chair now recognizes the  
583 gentlelady from Colorado, Ms. DeGette. We are going by the order  
584 we were given.

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585 Ms. DeGette. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

586 Mr. Dorsey, thank you so much for joining us here today  
587 because these are important issues, and even though the Democrats  
588 have highlighted that, really, some of the reasons why you came  
589 are -- we think are political and wrong, nonetheless, there are  
590 some real issues with Twitter that I think we can discuss today.

591

592 And as you said, Twitter really has become a tool for  
593 engagement across society and, recently, we saw some of its  
594 positive social change with the role it's played in the #MeToo  
595 movement.

596 But nonetheless, Twitter has also experienced its own sexual  
597 harassment problem to confront and I just wanted to ask you some  
598 questions about how Twitter is dealing with these issues.

599 I don't know if you're aware, Mr. Dorsey, of the Amnesty  
600 International report called "Toxic Twitter: A Toxic Place for  
601 Women." Are you aware of that?

602 Mr. Dorsey. I am aware of it.

603 Ms. DeGette. Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask unanimous  
604 consent to put that in the record.

605 The Chairman. Without objection.

606 [The information follows:]

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\*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT 2\*\*\*\*\*

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609 Ms. DeGette. Now, in that report, it described the issues  
610 women face on Twitter and how Twitter could change to be more  
611 friendly to women. I assume you have talked to Amnesty  
612 International about this report and about some of their  
613 recommendations?

614 Mr. Dorsey. I am not sure if -- I haven't personally but  
615 I imagine that the folks on our team have. But we can follow  
616 up with you.

617 Ms. DeGette. Thank you.

618 The report goes into great and, frankly, graphic detail of  
619 the types of abuses that have been used -- experienced on Twitter  
620 including threats of rape, bodily harm, and death.

621 Now, some were found -- have found to violate Twitter's  
622 guidelines but others were not, and I think probably you and your  
623 staff agree that Twitter needs to do a better job of addressing  
624 instances where some of the users are using the platform to harass  
625 and threaten others.

626 And so I am wondering if you can tell me does Twitter  
627 currently have data on reports of abuse of conduct including on  
628 the basis of race, religion, gender, or orientation, targeted  
629 harassment, or threats of violence? And separately, does Twitter  
630 have data on the actions that it has taken to address these

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631 complaints?

632 Mr. Dorsey. So a few things here. First and foremost, we  
633 don't believe that we can create a digital public square for people  
634 if they don't feel safe to participate in the first place, and  
635 that is our number one and singular objective as a company is  
636 to increase the health of this public space.

637 We do have data on all violations that we have seen across  
638 the platform and the context of those violations, and we do intend  
639 -- and this will be an initiative this year -- to create a  
640 transparency report that will make that data more public so that  
641 all can learn from it and we can also be held publicly accountable  
642 to it.

643 Ms. DeGette. That's good news, and you say you will have  
644 that this year yet, by the end of --

645 Mr. Dorsey. We are working on it as an initiative this year.  
646 We have a lot of work to do to aggregate all the data and to  
647 report that will be meaningful --

648 Ms. DeGette. And is Twitter also taking actions to address  
649 some of the deficiencies that have been identified in this report  
650 and in other places?

651 Mr. Dorsey. We are. We definitely -- we are focussing --  
652 one other point I wanted to make is that we don't feel it's fair

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653 that the victims of abuse and harassment have to do the work to  
654 report it.

655 Ms. DeGette. Yes.

656 Mr. Dorsey. Today, our system does work on reports,  
657 especially when it has to take content down. So abuse reports  
658 is a metric that we would look at, not as something that we want  
659 to go up because it's easier to report things but as something  
660 we want to go down not only because we think that we can -- we  
661 can reduce the amount of abuse but we can actually create  
662 technology to recognize it before people have to do the reporting  
663 themselves.

664 Ms. DeGette. Recognize it and take it down before a report  
665 has to be made?

666 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. Any series of enforcement actions all  
667 the way to the -- to the extreme of it, which is removing content.

668 Ms. DeGette. Thank you.

669 Mr. Chairman, I just want to say for the record I don't think  
670 these issues are unique to Twitter. Unlike so many of the  
671 invented borderline conspiracy theories, I believe this is a real  
672 threat and I appreciate you, Mr. Dorsey, taking this seriously  
673 and your entire organization so that we can really reduce these  
674 threats online.

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675 Thank you, and I yield back.

676 Mr. Dorsey. Thank you.

677 The Chairman. The gentlelady yields back.

678 The chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois, Mr.

679 Shimkus, for questions.

680 Mr. Shimkus. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

681 Mr. Dorsey, first of all, go Cards. I am from the St. Louis  
682 metropolitan area and be careful of Colin behind you, who has  
683 been known to be in this committee room a couple times. So we  
684 are glad to have him back.

685 The -- while -- and I want to go to my questions and then  
686 hopefully have time for a little summation. While listening to  
687 users is important, how can anyone be sure that standards about  
688 what quote, unquote, "distracts" or "distorts" are being handled  
689 fairly and consistently? And the follow-up is doesn't this give  
690 power to the loudest mob and, ultimately, fail to protect  
691 controversial speech?

692 Mr. Dorsey. So this goes back to that framework I was  
693 discussing around health and, again, I don't -- I don't know if  
694 those are the right indicators yet. That's why we are looking  
695 for outside help to make sure that we are doing the right work.

696 But we should have an understanding and a measurement --

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697 a tangible measurement -- of our effects on our system and,  
698 specifically, in these cases we are looking for behaviors that  
699 try to artificially amplify information and game our systems in  
700 some ways that might happen --

701 Mr. Shimkus. Would you consider -- I am sorry to interrupt  
702 -- but a bot would be -- you would consider that as manipulating  
703 the system, right?

704 Mr. Dorsey. If a bot is used for manipulating the  
705 conversation and the way we --

706 Mr. Shimkus. What about -- what about if the users band  
707 together? Would that be a -- you would consider manipulation?

708 Mr. Dorsey. The same -- and that's why it makes this issue  
709 complicated is because sometimes we see bots. Sometimes we see  
710 human coordinations in order to manipulate.

711 Mr. Shimkus. Thank you. The -- Twitter has a verification  
712 program where users can be verified by Twitter as legitimate and  
713 verified users have a blue checkmark next to their name on their  
714 page. How does the review process for designating verified users  
715 align with your community guidelines or standards?

716 Mr. Dorsey. Well, to be very frank, our verification  
717 program right now is not where we'd like it to be and we do believe  
718 it is in serious need of a reboot and a reworking.

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719           And it has a long history. It started as a way to verify  
720 that the CDC account was the actual CDC account during the swine  
721 flu and we brought into -- without as many principles -- strong  
722 principles -- as we needed and then we opened the door to everyone,  
723 and, unfortunately, that has caused some issues because the  
724 verified badge also is a signal that is used in some of our  
725 algorithms to rank higher or to inject within shared areas of  
726 the --

727           Mr. Shimkus. That was my next question. You do prioritize  
728 content shared by verified users currently?

729           Mr. Dorsey. We do have signals that do that. We are  
730 identifying those and asking ourselves whether that is still true  
731 and it's still correct today.

732           Mr. Shimkus. And then I am just going to end with my final  
733 minute to talk about industry standards. I think my colleague,  
734 Diana DeGette, hit on the issue because this is across the  
735 technological space.

736           You're not the only one that's trying to address these type  
737 of concerns. Many industries have banded together to have  
738 industry standards by which they can comply and also can help  
739 self-police and self-correct.

740           I would encourage the tech sector to start looking at that

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741 model and there's a lot of them out there. I was fortunate to  
742 get this book, "The Future Computed," in one of my visits to Tech  
743 World, and, you know, they just mention fairness, reliability,  
744 privacy, inclusion, transparency, and accountability as kind of  
745 baseloads of standards that should go across the platform, and  
746 we need to get there for the use of the platforms and the trust.

747 And with that, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yield back.

748 The Chairman. The gentleman yields back.

749 The chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Green,  
750 for questions.

751 Mr. Green. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

752 Mr. Dorsey, thank you for being here today and I am pleased  
753 that Twitter started taking steps to improve users' experience  
754 on its platform.

755 However, Twitter's current policies still leave the  
756 consumers in danger of the spread of misinformation and  
757 harassment.

758 Twitter needs to strengthen its policies to ensure that users  
759 are protected from fake accounts, misinformation, and harassment,  
760 and I know that's an issue you all are trying to address.

761 I would like to start off by addressing privacy. Twitter  
762 has changed its policy in regards to the general data protection

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763 regulation that went into effect by the European Union this  
764 summer.

765 The GDPR makes it clear that consumers need to be in control  
766 of their own data and understands how their data is being given  
767 to others.

768 Mr. Dorsey, as it now stands, the United States does not  
769 mandate these settings are enforced. However, I think they are  
770 important for an integral part of consumers.

771 My question is will Twitter commit to allowing users in the  
772 United States have the option of opting out of tracking, despite  
773 the fact that there's no current regulation mandating this for  
774 protection for consumers?

775 Mr. Dorsey. Thank you for the question.

776 We -- even before GDPR was enacted and we complied with that  
777 regulation, a year prior we were actively making sure that our  
778 -- the people that we serve have the controls necessary to opt  
779 out of tracking across the web, to understand all the data that  
780 we have inferred on their usage, and to individually turn that  
781 off and on.

782 So we took some major steps pre-GDPR and made sure that we  
783 complied with GDPR as well. We are very different from our peers  
784 in that the majority of what is on Twitter is public.

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785           People are approaching Twitter with a mind-set of when I  
786 tweet this the whole world can see it. So we have -- we have  
787 a different approach and different needs.

788           But we do believe that privacy is a fundamental human right  
789 and we will work to protect it and continue to look for ways to  
790 give people more control and more transparency around what we  
791 have on them.

792           Mr. Green. Thank you.

793           One of the steps Twitter has taken to protect consumers has  
794 been to come together with other social media platforms to create  
795 the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism.

796           However, there is no forum to counter fake bot accounts on  
797 social media platforms. What steps is Twitter taking to work  
798 together with social media platforms to combat these fake bots  
799 accounts like the 770 accounts Twitter and other social media  
800 platforms recently deleted that were linked to Russian and Iranian  
801 disinformation campaigns?

802           Mr. Dorsey. Yes. So this one is definitely a complicated  
803 issue that we are addressing head on. There's a few things we  
804 -- we would love to just generally be able to identify bots across  
805 the platform and we can do that by recognizing when people come  
806 in through our API.

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807           There are other vectors of attack where people script our  
808 website or our app to make it look as if they were humans and  
809 they're not coming through our API.

810           So it's not a simple answer. But having said that, we have  
811 gotten a lot better in terms of identifying and also challenging  
812 accounts.

813           We identify 8 to 10 million accounts every single week and  
814 challenge them to determine if they're human or not and we've  
815 also thwarted over half a million accounts every single day from  
816 even logging in to Twitter because of what we detected to be  
817 suspicious activity.

818           So there's a lot more that we need to do but I think we do  
819 have a good start. We always want to side with more automated  
820 technology that recognize behavior and patterns instead of going  
821 down to the surface area of names or profile images or what not.

822

823           So we are looking for behaviors and the intention of the  
824 action, which is oftentimes to artificially amplify information  
825 and manipulate others.

826           Mr. Green. Okay.

827           Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know I am out of my time, and  
828 thank you for being here today.

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829 The Chairman. Mr. Green.

830 Mr. Dorsey. Thank you so much.

831 The Chairman. The chair will now recognize the gentleman  
832 from Texas, the chairman of our Health Subcommittee, Dr. Burgess,  
833 for four minutes for questions.

834 Mr. Burgess. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

835 Thank you, Mr. Dorsey, for being here. I will just say that,  
836 you know, Twitter is -- in addition to everything else, it's a  
837 news source.

838 I mean, it's how I learned of the death of Osama bin Laden  
839 many, many years ago when Seal Team 6 provided that information  
840 and it happened in real time, late, a Sunday night. The news  
841 shows were all over, and Twitter provided the information.

842 This morning, sitting in conference, not able to get to a  
843 television, one of my local television stations was attacked and  
844 Twitter provided the real-time information and updates. So it's  
845 extremely useful and for that as a tool I thank you.

846 Sometimes, though -- well, Meghan McCain's husband  
847 complained a lot on Twitter over the weekend because of a doctored  
848 image of Meghan McCain that was put up on Twitter and then it  
849 seemed like it took forever for that to come down.

850 Is there not some way that people can -- I understand there

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851 are algorithms. I understand that, you know, you have to have  
852 checks and balances. But, really, it shouldn't take hours for  
853 something that's that egregious to be addressed.

854 Mr. Dorsey. Absolutely, and that was unacceptable and we  
855 don't want to use our scale as an excuse here. We do need to  
856 -- we need to do two things.

857 Number one, we can't place the burden on the victims and  
858 that means we need to build technology so that we are not waiting  
859 for reports -- that we are actively looking for instances.

860 While we do have reports and while we do -- while we are  
861 making those changes and building that technology, we need to  
862 do a better job at prioritizing, especially any sort of violent  
863 or threatening information.

864 In this particular case, this was an image and we just didn't  
865 apply the image filter to recognize what was going on in real  
866 time. So we did take way too many hours to act and we are using  
867 that as a lesson to -- in order to help improve our systems.

868 Mr. Burgess. And I am sure you have. But just for the  
869 record, have you apologized to the McCain family?

870 Mr. Dorsey. I haven't personally but I will.

871 Mr. Burgess. I think you just did.

872 But along the same lines, but maybe a little bit different

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873 -- I mean, the chairman referenced several members of Congress  
874 who had been affected by what was described as shadow banning.

875

876 So does someone have to report? Is it only fixed if someone  
877 complains about it? And if no one complained, would it have been  
878 fixed? So with Mr. Jordan, Mr. Meadows, Mr. Gaetz, and their  
879 accounts being diminished, is it only because they complained  
880 that that got fixed?

881 Mr. Dorsey. It's a completely fair point and, you know,  
882 we are regularly looking at the outcomes of our algorithms. It  
883 wasn't just the voices of members of Congress.

884 We saw, as we rolled this system out, a general conversation  
885 about it and sometimes we need to roll these out and see what  
886 happens because we are not going to be able to test every single  
887 outcome in the right way.

888 So we did get a lot of feedback and a lot of conversations  
889 about it and that is what prompted more digging and an  
890 understanding of what we were actually doing and whether it was  
891 the right approach.

892 Mr. Burgess. And as a committee, can we expect any sort  
893 of follow-up as to your own internal investigation -- your own  
894 investigations digging that you described? Is that something

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895 that you can share with us as you get more information?

896 Mr. Dorsey. We would -- we would love to. I mean, we want  
897 to put a premium on transparency and also how we can give you  
898 information that is, clearly, accountable to changes.

899 That is why we are putting the majority of our focus on this  
900 particular topic into our transparency report that we would love  
901 to -- we'd love to release. It's going to require a bunch of  
902 work --

903 Mr. Burgess. Sure.

904 Mr. Dorsey. -- and some time to do that. But we would  
905 love to share it.

906 Mr. Burgess. And we appreciate your attention to that.

907 Mr. Chairman, I will yield back. Thank you.

908 The Chairman. The gentleman yields back.

909 The chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr.  
910 Doyle, for four minutes.

911 Mr. Doyle. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

912 Mr. Dorsey, welcome. Thanks for being here. I want to read  
913 a few quotes about Twitter's practices and I just want you to  
914 tell me if they're true or not.

915 "Social media is being rigged to censor conservatives."

916 Is that true of Twitter?

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917 Mr. Dorsey. No.

918 Mr. Doyle. "I don't know what Twitter is up to. It sure  
919 looks like to me that they're censoring people and they ought  
920 to stop it." Are you censoring people?

921 Mr. Dorsey. No.

922 Mr. Doyle. "Twitter is shadow banning prominent  
923 Republicans. That's bad." Is that true?

924 Mr. Dorsey. No.

925 Mr. Doyle. So these were statements made by Kevin McCarthy,  
926 the House majority leader, on Twitter, Devin Nunes on Fox News,  
927 and President Trump on Twitter, and I want to place those  
928 statements into the record, Mr. Chairman.

929 The Chairman. Without objection.

930 [The information follows:]

931

932 \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT 3\*\*\*\*\*

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933 Mr. Doyle. I think it's important for people to understand  
934 -- you know, the premise of this whole hearing and the reason  
935 that Twitter somehow, with all the other social media platforms  
936 out there, got the singular honor to sit in front of this committee  
937 is because there is some implication that your site is trying  
938 to censor conservative voices on your platform.

939 Now, when you tried to explain the shadow banning, as I  
940 understand it you had a system where if people who were following  
941 people had some behaviors, that was the trigger that allowed --  
942 that caused you to do the shadow banning.

943 So you were really like an equal opportunity shadow banner,  
944 right? You didn't just shadow ban four conservative Republicans.

945  
946 You shadow banned 600,000 people across your entire platform  
947 across the globe who had people following them that had certain  
948 behaviors that caused you to downgrade them coming up. Is that  
949 correct?

950 Mr. Dorsey. Correct.

951 Mr. Doyle. So this was never targeted at conservative  
952 Republicans. This was targeted to a group of 600,000 people  
953 because of the people who followed them, and then you determined  
954 that wasn't fair and you corrected that practice. Is that

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955 correct?

956 Mr. Dorsey. Correct.

957 Mr. Doyle. So just for the record, since you have been  
958 singled out as a social media platform before this committee,  
959 Twitter undertook no behavior to selectively censor conservative  
960 Republicans or conservative voices on your platform. Is that  
961 correct?

962 Mr. Dorsey. Correct.

963 Mr. Doyle. Good. So let the record reflect that because  
964 that's the whole reason supposedly we are here, because House  
965 Leader Kevin McCarthy wrote our chairman a letter and said, hey,  
966 this is going on and we think your committee should investigate  
967 it, and it's a load of crap.

968 Now, let me ask you a couple other things while I still have  
969 some time. What are you doing to address the real concerns many  
970 of us have about Twitter -- people that use Twitter to bully,  
971 troll, or threaten other people?

972 We know that this has led to many prominent users,  
973 particularly women, who have been targeted with sexual threats  
974 leaving Twitter because of this toxic environment.

975 Now, I understand that you're working to address these issues  
976 and that you want to to use machine learning and AI. But I am

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977 concerned that these solutions will take too long to deploy and  
978 that they can't cure the ills that Twitter is currently suffering  
979 from.

980 So my question is how can we be assured that you and your  
981 company have the proper incentives to address the toxicity and  
982 abusive behavior on your platform, given Twitter's current state?

983 Mr. Dorsey. First and foremost, we -- our singular  
984 objective as a company right now is to increase the health of  
985 public conversation and we realize that that will come at  
986 short-term cost.

987 We realize that we will be removing accounts. We realize  
988 that it doesn't necessarily go into a formula where -- I think  
989 there's a perception that we are not going to act because we want  
990 as much activity as possible. That is --

991 Mr. Doyle. Right. There's like an economic disincentive  
992 to act because it takes people from your platform.

993 Mr. Dorsey. That is not true. So we see increasing health  
994 of public conversation as a growth vector for us.

995 Mr. Doyle. Good.

996 Mr. Dorsey. It's not a short-term growth vector. It is  
997 a long-term growth vector and we are willing to take the hard  
998 -- to take the hard path and the decisions in order to do so and

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999 we communicated a lot of these during our last earnings call and  
1000 the reaction by Wall Street was not as positive.

1001 But we believe it was important for us to continue to increase  
1002 the health of this public square. Otherwise, no one's going to  
1003 use it in the first place.

1004 Mr. Doyle. Thank you for being here today.

1005 I yield back.

1006 The Chairman. The gentleman yields back.

1007 The chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas, former  
1008 chairman of the committee, Mr. Barton, for four minutes.

1009 Mr. Barton. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank  
1010 you, sir, for appearing voluntarily without subpoena and standing  
1011 or sitting there all by yourself. That's refreshing.

1012 I don't know what a Twitter CEO should look like but you  
1013 don't look like a CEO of Twitter should look like with that beard.

1014 Mr. Dorsey. My mom would agree with you.

1015 [Laughter.]

1016 Mr. Barton. I am going to kind of reverse the questions  
1017 that my good friend, Mr. Doyle, just asked so that we kind of  
1018 get both sides of the question.

1019 In the -- in a July blog post, your company, Twitter,  
1020 indicated some Democrat politicians were not properly showing

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1021 up within search auto suggestions. In other words, your company  
1022 said that your algorithm were somewhat discriminatory against  
1023 Democrats.

1024 Can you identify which Democrat representatives and accounts  
1025 weren't properly showing up?

1026 Mr. Dorsey. We typically don't identify those as a matter  
1027 of protecting their privacy and they haven't communicated that.

1028 But we can certainly follow up with your staff.

1029 Mr. Barton. All right. Can you identify how many without  
1030 naming names?

1031 Mr. Dorsey. I can -- we'll follow up with your staff on  
1032 that.

1033 Mr. Barton. Can you personally vouch that that statement  
1034 is a true statement --

1035 Mr. Dorsey. Yes.

1036 Mr. Barton. -- that there are Democrat politicians who,  
1037 when you did the auto search, they didn't show up?

1038 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. It was -- it was over 600,000 accounts.

1039 Mr. Barton. No. No. There were 600,000 accounts affected  
1040 but how many Democrat versus Republican accounts?

1041 Mr. Dorsey. Yes, I --

1042 Mr. Barton. The allegation that we made, the Republicans,

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1043 is that you're discriminatory against us -- against the  
1044 Republicans. Your post says, well, there were some Democrat  
1045 politicians, too.

1046 So out of 600,000 if there were a thousand Republicans and  
1047 10 Democrats, it still seems somewhat biased. If it's 50/50,  
1048 then that's a whole different ball game.

1049 Mr. Dorsey. Well, we agree that the result was not impartial  
1050 and that is why we corrected it and we fixed it.

1051 Mr. Barton. So you do agree that there were more Republicans  
1052 than Democrats?

1053 Mr. Dorsey. I didn't say that. But I do -- I do --

1054 Mr. Barton. Well, you can't have it both ways, sir.

1055 [Laughter.]

1056 It's either 50/50 or one side is disproportionately affected  
1057 and the allegation is that more Republicans were affected.

1058 Mr. Dorsey. Well, we don't always have the best methods  
1059 to determine who is a Republican and who is a Democrat. We have  
1060 to refer --

1061 Mr. Barton. Well, usually it's known because we run as  
1062 Republicans or Democrats. That's not hard to identify.

1063 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. When it is self-identified it's easier.  
1064 But we -- you know, we are happy to follow up with you.

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1065 Mr. Barton. Well, do you want to -- my chairman keeps  
1066 whispering in my ear. I am glad to have a staffer who's the  
1067 chairman of the committee.

1068 Do you discriminate more on philosophy like  
1069 anti-conservative versus pro-liberal?

1070 Mr. Dorsey. No. Our policies and our algorithms don't take  
1071 into consideration any affiliation philosophy or viewpoint.

1072 Mr. Barton. That's hard to stomach. I am not -- I just  
1073 -- we wouldn't be having this discussion if there wasn't a general  
1074 agreement that your company has discriminated against  
1075 conservatives, most of whom happen to be Republican.

1076 Mr. Dorsey. I believe that we have found impartial outcomes  
1077 and those are what we intend to fix and continue to measure.

1078 Mr. Barton. All right. Well, my time is about to expire.  
1079 You said you would provide my staff those answers with some more  
1080 specificity and I hope you mean that.

1081 But, again, thank you for voluntarily appearing. I yield  
1082 back.

1083 Mr. Dorsey. Thank you. We'll follow up with you.

1084 The Chairman. The gentleman yields back.

1085 The chair recognizes the gentlelady from California, Ms.  
1086 Matsui, for four minutes for questions.

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1087 Ms. Matsui. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

1088 Mr. Dorsey, thank you for being here. I know it's becoming  
1089 a long day for you.

1090 I want to talk to you about anonymization. It's been noted  
1091 that advertising is less concerned with identifying the  
1092 individual per se than with the activity of users to predict and  
1093 infer consumer behavior.

1094 But I wonder if that is quickly becoming a distinction  
1095 without a difference. Even when user content isn't associated  
1096 with that user's name, precise information can and is gathered  
1097 through metadata associated with messages or tweets.

1098 For instance, Twitter offers geospatial metadata that  
1099 requires parsing the tweet for location and names of interest  
1100 including nicknames. The metadata could then be associated with  
1101 other publicly available social media data to re-identify  
1102 individuals, and researchers have demonstrated this ability.

1103 So even though advertising itself may not be considered with  
1104 identifying the individual, how is Twitter working to ensure its  
1105 data is not being used by others to do so?

1106 Mr. Dorsey. Well, we -- first and foremost, the data on  
1107 Twitter is very different than our peer companies, given that  
1108 the majority of our data is public by default, and where we do

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1109 infer information around people's interests or their behaviors  
1110 on the network we enable them, first and foremost, to see what  
1111 we've collected and, second, turn it off.

1112 And in terms of our data business, our data business is  
1113 actually focussed on packaging up and making real time the public  
1114 data, and we send everyone who wants to consume that real-time  
1115 stream of the public data through a know-your-customer process,  
1116 which we audit every year as well to make sure that the intent  
1117 is still good and proper and also consistent with how they signed  
1118 up.

1119 Ms. Matsui. Okay. As I previously announced in this  
1120 committee, I am soon introducing legislation to direct the  
1121 Department of Commerce to convene a working group of stakeholders  
1122 to develop a consensus-based definition of block chain.

1123 Distributed ledger technologies such as block chain have  
1124 particularly interesting potential applications in the  
1125 communications space ranging from identity verification to IOT  
1126 deployments and spectrum sharing.

1127 But there currently is no common definition of block chain,  
1128 which could hinder in its deployment. You had previously  
1129 expressed interest in the broad applications of block chain  
1130 technology including potentially any effort to verify identity

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1131 to fight misinformation and scams.

1132 What potential applications do you see for block chain?

1133 Mr. Dorsey. You know, first and foremost, we need to start  
1134 with problems that we are trying to solve and the problems we  
1135 are solving for our customers and then look at all available  
1136 technology in order to understand if it can help us or accelerate  
1137 or make those outcomes much better.

1138 So block chain is one that I think has a lot of untapped  
1139 potential, specifically around distributed trust and distributed  
1140 enforcement, potentially.

1141 We haven't gone as deep as we'd like just yet in understanding  
1142 how we might apply this technology to the problems we are facing  
1143 at Twitter but we do have people within the company thinking about  
1144 it today.

1145 Ms. Matsui. Okay. Advertising-supported models like  
1146 Twitter generate revenue through user-provided data. In your  
1147 terms of service, you maintain that what's yours is yours -- you  
1148 own your content.

1149 I appreciate that, but I want to understand more about that.  
1150 To me, it means users ought to have some say about if, how, and  
1151 when it's used.

1152 But you say that Twitter has an evolving set of rules for

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1153 how partners can interact with user content and that Twitter may  
1154 modify or adapt this content as it's distributed.

1155 The hearings this committee has held demonstrated that the  
1156 real crux of the issue is how content is used and modified to  
1157 develop assumptions and inferences about users to better target  
1158 ads to the individual.

1159 Do you believe that consumers own their data, even when that  
1160 data has modified, used to develop inferences, supplemented by  
1161 additional data, or otherwise?

1162 Mr. Dorsey. Sorry. What was the question? Do I --

1163 Ms. Matsui. Do you believe that consumers own their data?

1164 Mr. Dorsey. Yes.

1165 Ms. Matsui. Even when that data has modified, used to  
1166 develop inferences, supplemented by additional data, or  
1167 otherwise?

1168 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. Generally, we would want to understand  
1169 all the ramifications of that. But yes, we believe that people  
1170 own their data and should have ultimate control over it.

1171 Ms. Matsui. Okay. Thank you.

1172 I yield back.

1173 The Chairman. The gentlelady yields back.

1174 The chair now recognizes the whip of the House, Mr. Scalise,

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57

1175 for four minutes.

1176 Mr. Scalise. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1177 And Mr. Dorsey, appreciate you coming, and as others have  
1178 said, we are welcoming your testimony and your willingness to  
1179 answer some of these questions, and I think there are serious  
1180 concerns more than anything about how Twitter has been used and  
1181 will continue to be used and, clearly, there is many examples  
1182 of things that Twitter has done and you can just look at the Arab  
1183 Spring.

1184 Many people would suggest that a lot of the real ability  
1185 for the Arab Spring to take off started with platforms like  
1186 Twitter, and in 2009 you were banned in Iran and we've seen other  
1187 countries -- China and North Korea have banned Twitter.

1188 And I would imagine when Twitter was banned, it wasn't a  
1189 good feeling. But what we are concerned about is how Twitter  
1190 has, in some ways, it looks like selectively adversely affected  
1191 conservatives.

1192 I want to go through a couple of examples, and I would imagine  
1193 you're familiar with these but our colleague, Marsha Blackburn,  
1194 when she announced her campaign for the Senate, Twitter quickly  
1195 banned her announcement advertisement because it had a pro-life  
1196 message.

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1197 She, at the time, was the chair of the Special Select  
1198 Committee that a number of my colleagues, both Republican and  
1199 Democrat, here were on it that were looking into the sale of body  
1200 parts, and Twitter banned her because they said this statement  
1201 was deemed an inflammatory statement that is likely to evoke a  
1202 strong negative reaction.

1203 Are you familiar with this?

1204 Mr. Dorsey. Yes.

1205 Mr. Scalise. Why was she banned for just stating a fact  
1206 that Congress was actually investigating because of the deep  
1207 concern nationally when this scandal took place?

1208 Mr. Dorsey. Well, first, we -- this was a mistake and we  
1209 do apologize --

1210 Mr. Scalise. This was a mistake by Twitter?

1211 Mr. Dorsey. It was a mistake by Twitter. It was a mistake  
1212 by us, which we corrected.

1213 Mr. Scalise. So was anybody held accountable for that  
1214 mistake?

1215 Mr. Dorsey. What do you mean by that?

1216 Mr. Scalise. Well, somebody -- I mean, there was a  
1217 spokesperson that said we deem it inflammatory -- Twitter deems  
1218 it inflammatory and at the same time the organization that was

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1219 selling the body parts was not banned by Twitter but our colleague,  
1220 who just exposed the fact that the sale of body parts was going  
1221 on, was banned by Twitter, and your -- one of your own  
1222 spokespersons said that it was inflammatory.

1223 Was that person held accountable for making those kind of  
1224 statements?

1225 Mr. Dorsey. We use the -- you know, these events and these  
1226 opportunities to improve our process and look for ways --

1227 Mr. Scalise. And we've talked about that and, obviously,  
1228 I appreciate the fact that you have acknowledged that there have  
1229 been some mistakes made in algorithms and we've talked about this  
1230 with other companies.

1231 Facebook was in here talking about similar concerns that  
1232 we had with their algorithm and how we felt that might have biased  
1233 against conservatives.

1234 A liberal website, Vice, did a study of all members of  
1235 Congress -- all 535 -- and they identified only three that they  
1236 felt were targeted in the shadow banning and that was Reps.  
1237 Meadows, Jordan, and Gaetz.

1238 And I know while, I think, Mr. Barton was trying to get into  
1239 this in more detail, if there were 600,000, ultimately they did  
1240 a study and found only three members of Congress were biased

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1241 against and all three happened to be conservatives.

1242           And so can you at least see that that is a concern that a  
1243 lot of us have if there is a real bias in the algorithm as it  
1244 was developed?

1245           And look, I've written algorithms before. So if somebody  
1246 wrote an algorithm with a bias against conservatives, I would  
1247 hope you are trying to find out who those people are and if they're  
1248 using their own personal viewpoints to discriminate against  
1249 certain people.

1250           Because if it's your stated intention that you don't want  
1251 that discrimination to take place, I would hope that you would  
1252 want to know if there are people working for Twitter that did  
1253 have that kind of discriminatory viewpoint against conservatives  
1254 that you would at least hold them accountable so that it doesn't  
1255 happen again.

1256           Mr. Dorsey. I would want to know that, and I assure you  
1257 that the algorithm was not written with that intention. The  
1258 signal that we were using caught people up in it and it was a  
1259 signal that we determined was not relevant and also not fair in  
1260 this particular case.

1261           And there will be times -- and this is where we need to  
1262 experiment, as you know, in writing algorithms in the past --

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1263 that you need to test things and see if they work at scale and  
1264 pull them back correctly if they don't and that is -- that is  
1265 our intention.

1266 Mr. Scalise. But also you shouldn't inject your own  
1267 personal viewpoint into that unless that's the intention of the  
1268 company. But you're saying it's not the intention of the company.

1269 Mr. Dorsey. That is not the intention and they should never  
1270 be ejecting people.

1271 Mr. Scalise. And I know I am out of time. But I appreciate  
1272 at least your answering these questions. Hopefully, we can get  
1273 some more answers to these examples and there are others like  
1274 this that we'd surely like to have addressed.

1275 Thank you. Yield back.

1276 The Chairman. The chair now recognizes the --

1277 [Disturbance in hearing room.]

1278 The Chairman. Order. We'll have order in the hearing room  
1279 or you will be asked to leave. You -- ma'am, if you will please  
1280 take a seat or we'll have to have you -- then you will need to  
1281 relieve --

1282 [Disturbance in hearing room.]

1283 Mr. Long. Huh? What's she saying? I can't understand  
1284 her. What? What's she --

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1285           The Chairman.   Officer, will you escort this young lady out,  
1286 please?

1287           Somehow I think our auctioneer in residence is going to get  
1288 tweeted about today.   Yeah.

1289           I would remind members of the audience you're here to  
1290 observed, not participate, and I appreciate that.

1291           We'll now turn to the gentleman from New York, Mr. Engel,  
1292 for four minutes.

1293           Mr. Engel.   That's a hard act to follow, Mr. Chairman.  
1294 That's a hard act to follow.   Maybe I will get Mr. Long to help  
1295 me along a little bit as well.

1296           Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Pallone.

1297           Mr. Dorsey, welcome.   Our country is facing a direct threat  
1298 to our democratic institutions.   We need to find ways to stop  
1299 foreign adversaries like Russia and Iran from using American  
1300 technology against us.

1301           Earlier this year, Special Counsel Robert Mueller, filed  
1302 an indictment against a Russian internet research agency,  
1303 charging that they created fake social media accounts, sometimes  
1304 using American stolen identities, to sow discord and interfere  
1305 with our 2016 elections.   I have a copy of that indictment here,  
1306 and Mr. Chairman, I would like to introduce it for the record.

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1307           The Chairman. Without objection.

1308           [The information follows:]

1309

1310           \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT 4\*\*\*\*\*

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1311 Mr. Engel. Mr. Dorsey, Twitter recently took down a number  
1312 of Russian- and Iranian-linked accounts after it was tipped off  
1313 by a cybersecurity firm.

1314 I am glad to see that Twitter is taking action to protect  
1315 us. But do you think we should be concerned that an outside  
1316 cybersecurity firm detected fraudulent activity before you did?

1317 Mr. Dorsey. Well, I think it's really important that we  
1318 have outsiders and we have an open channel to them because they're  
1319 always going to approach the data and the work in a way that we  
1320 may not see, and we are going to do our best to capture everything  
1321 that we can and to be as proactive as we can.

1322 But we want to leave room for others to bring a different  
1323 perspective that might look at what's happening on the platform  
1324 in a different way that we do.

1325 Mr. Engel. So how confident are you that Twitter can  
1326 identify and remove all of the fake and automated accounts linked  
1327 to a foreign adversary on your platform?

1328 Mr. Dorsey. We are getting more and more confident. But  
1329 I do want to state that this is not something that has an end  
1330 point that reaches perfection.

1331 We are always going to have to stay 10 steps ahead of the  
1332 newest ways of attacking and newer vectors and we are getting

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1333 more agile and better at identifying those and that's showing  
1334 in some of our results, which I talked about earlier in the terms  
1335 of being able to identify 8 to 10 million suspicious accounts  
1336 every single week and then also challenging them to see if they're  
1337 humans or bots or some sort of malicious automation.

1338 Mr. Engel. I understand that Twitter is now requiring some  
1339 suspicious accounts to respond to recapture to prove that they're  
1340 human accounts and not bots.

1341 I was surprised to learn that you're not requiring users  
1342 to do the same thing when they first sign up to Twitter. New  
1343 accounts are authenticated using only an email address. Could  
1344 you tell me why that is?

1345 Mr. Dorsey. We actually do send accounts through a variety  
1346 of authentication including sometimes reCAPTCHA. It really  
1347 depends on the context and the information that we have. We have  
1348 thwarted over a half a million accounts from even logging in in  
1349 the first place because of that.

1350 Mr. Engel. I understand that dealing with foreign  
1351 adversaries can be difficult. Twitter may respond to one  
1352 practice only to find new tactics being used to sow discord.  
1353 Can you commit to us with any level of certainty that the 2018  
1354 mid-term elections in the United States will not be subject to

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1355 interference by foreign adversaries using bots or other fake  
1356 accounts on your platform?

1357 Mr. Dorsey. We are committing to making it our number-one  
1358 priority to help protect the integrity of the 2018 mid-terms and  
1359 especially the conversation around it.

1360 Mr. Engel. Let me ask you this, finally. Are you aware  
1361 of foreign adversaries using any different tactics on your  
1362 platform to interfere in our 2018 mid-term elections?

1363 Mr. Dorsey. None that we haven't communicated to the Senate  
1364 Intelligence Committee and any that we do find we will be  
1365 communicating and sharing with them.

1366 Mr. Engel. Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr.  
1367 Chairman.

1368 Mr. Dorsey. Thank you.

1369 The Chairman. I thank the gentleman.

1370 We now go to the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Latta, for four  
1371 minutes.

1372 Mr. Latta. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1373 And Mr. Dorsey, thanks very much for being here with us today.

1374 I would like to ask my first question on how you're protecting  
1375 that -- users' data. Do you collect any data from other third  
1376 parties about Twitter users?

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1377 Mr. Dorsey. We don't collect data from third parties about  
1378 Twitter folks. We do have embeds of tweets around the web and  
1379 when people do go visit those sites we note that and we can  
1380 integrate it when they do login to Twitter. But people can turn  
1381 that off as well.

1382 Mr. Latta. How does Twitter use that data?

1383 Mr. Dorsey. We use the data to personalize the experience  
1384 specifically around -- it might -- it might infer a particular  
1385 interest so that we can show them specific topics or make our  
1386 advertising targeting better.

1387 Mr. Latta. Is that sold or offered in some other forum then  
1388 for the advertisers?

1389 Mr. Dorsey. I am sorry?

1390 Mr. Latta. Is it sold to the advertisers?

1391 Mr. Dorsey. Is it sold to the advertisers? No.

1392 Mr. Latta. Okay.

1393 Let me back up to where Mr. Shimkus was when we were talking  
1394 about the verification of the blue checkmark. How easy is it  
1395 for someone to obtain a verified Twitter handle and what does  
1396 Twitter take to ensure it is not highlighting one political  
1397 viewpoint over another through the use of that verification on  
1398 the platform?

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1399 Mr. Dorsey. Well, right now it's extremely challenging  
1400 because we've paused the verification program because we've found  
1401 so many faults in it that we knew we needed a restart.

1402 We do make exceptions for any representatives of government,  
1403 particular brands, or public figures of interest. But we  
1404 generally have paused that work.

1405 Before that pause, we did allow anyone to submit an  
1406 application to be verified and it uses very -- it used various  
1407 criteria in order to determine if the verification was necessary.

1408 Mr. Latta. With that verification for that has said -- you  
1409 all have said that it can be removed for the activity on the on/off  
1410 platform. What off platform is the basis for someone using that  
1411 blue verified checkmark?

1412 Mr. Dorsey. We look at specifically any violent extremist  
1413 groups and off platform behavior for violent extremist groups,  
1414 when we consider not just verification but also holding an account  
1415 in the first place.

1416 Mr. Latta. Okay. In your statement, it said in the last  
1417 year Twitter developed and launched more than 30 policy and  
1418 product changes designed to "foster information, integrity, and  
1419 protect the people who use our service from abuse and malicious  
1420 automation."

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1421 Can you share with the committee what those 30-plus policy  
1422 and product changes are or highlight some and then give us the  
1423 others in written?

1424 Mr. Dorsey. Yes, and we can -- we can certainly follow up  
1425 with all of you on exactly the details. But we established new  
1426 models, for instance, to detect where people are gaming our  
1427 systems. These are algorithms with an intent to artificially  
1428 amplify.

1429 We have new reporting flows that enable people to report  
1430 tweets or accounts. We have changed policies reflective of  
1431 current circumstances and what we are seeing and we have certainly  
1432 done a bunch of work around GDPR, which has affected our work  
1433 in general. But we will follow up with you with enumeration.

1434 Mr. Latta. If we could get those 30 points that would be  
1435 great and submit those to the committee.

1436 You also indicated in your written statement that the company  
1437 conducted an internal analysis of members of Congress affected  
1438 by the auto suggest search issue and that you'd make that  
1439 information available to the committee if requested.

1440 Will you commit to us on the committee that you will present  
1441 all of Twitter's analysis as soon as that is possible after this  
1442 hearing?

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1443 Mr. Dorsey. Yes, and we also hope to include this in our  
1444 long-standing initiative of a transparency report around our  
1445 actions.

1446 Mr. Latta. Thank you.

1447 Mr. Chair, my time has expired.

1448 The Chairman. I thank the gentleman from Ohio.

1449 The chair recognizes the gentlelady from Florida, Ms.  
1450 Castor, for four minutes.

1451 Ms. Castor. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1452 Good afternoon. Mr. Dorsey, do you feel like you're being  
1453 manipulated yourself -- you're part of a manipulation campaign  
1454 because, I mean, when you see the majority leader of the Congress  
1455 is running ads on Facebook to fundraise around allegations of  
1456 anti-conservative bias on social media platforms and then you  
1457 see the Trump campaign use President Trump's tweets where he  
1458 claims anti-conservative bias at Google, Facebook, and Twitter,  
1459 and then you -- we saw this outburst today.

1460 The woman jumped up, of course, with her phone so that she  
1461 can get that and that's probably trying to spread on the web.

1462 And now, the Justice Department even says boy, this is so serious  
1463 we have to investigate.

1464 Does this feel like a manipulation campaign itself to you?

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1465 Mr. Dorsey. Look, as I noted in my opening, I do believe  
1466 that there's growing concern around the power that companies like  
1467 ours hold and the reason why is people do see us as a digital  
1468 public square and that comes with certain expectations and we  
1469 --

1470 Ms. Castor. That's a very diplomatic answer, I have to say,  
1471 because there are very serious questions. I mean, the Russian  
1472 trolls created thousands of bots to influence our democracy --  
1473 our elections. They're doing it in other countries across the  
1474 world.

1475 Do you -- do you feel like you have a handle on these bots?  
1476 You said earlier in your testimony you ID 8 to 10 million accounts  
1477 per month. Is that right?

1478 Mr. Dorsey. Per week.

1479 Ms. Castor. Per week?

1480 Mr. Dorsey. And to thwart over half a million accounts from  
1481 logging in every single day.

1482 Ms. Castor. Can Twitter keep up?

1483 Mr. Dorsey. We intend to keep up. So --

1484 Ms. Castor. I mean, if they -- if they are using automated  
1485 accounts, isn't -- don't we reach a point where they're -- they  
1486 have the ability to overwhelm content on Twitter and affect your

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1487 algorithms?

1488 Mr. Dorsey. Maybe. I mean, it is definitely -- others have  
1489 described this as an arms race. But I believe it's very much  
1490 like security. There's no perfect end point.

1491 When you build a lock, someone else will figure out how to  
1492 break it, and therefore, you can't try to design and optimize  
1493 for the perfect lock. You always have to build those into the  
1494 system.

1495 Ms. Castor. Can't you -- can't you identify the bots at  
1496 least as they sign up in some way so that folks understand okay,  
1497 that's a fake automated account?

1498 Mr. Dorsey. In certain cases, we can -- and it's a great  
1499 point -- especially through our API. There are more  
1500 sophisticated ways of automation that actually script our site  
1501 and our app that are much harder to detect because they're  
1502 intending to look like human behavior with the slowness of human  
1503 behavior rather than the speed of through an API.

1504 So it's a little bit more complicated. It's not a challenge  
1505 we are not intending to face. We are taking it head on.

1506 Ms. Castor. You have some creative minds. I would think  
1507 you can put all of those creative minds, all of your expertise,  
1508 to work to do that.

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1509 I want to ask you a little bit about privacy. Twitter and  
1510 other companies collect information on users and nonusers  
1511 oftentimes without their knowledge.

1512 Twitter's business model is based on advertising and you  
1513 serve targeted advertising to users based on vast amounts of data  
1514 that you collect, which raises consumer privacy concerns.

1515 You -- up until last year, you -- the privacy policy included  
1516 a promise to support do not track. But then you changed your  
1517 mind.

1518 Why? Why shouldn't it be up to consumers? Why shouldn't  
1519 it be the consumer's choice on tracking?

1520 Mr. Dorsey. Well, we do allow consumers within the app to  
1521 turn off tracking across the web.

1522 Ms. Castor. But they cannot -- you're still able to build  
1523 the -- a profile on each and every user. Isn't that correct?

1524 Mr. Dorsey. If they log into the account then yes, and we  
1525 allow them to turn that off.

1526 Ms. Castor. But I understand that even when they go and  
1527 they change the -- they opt out that you're still collecting data  
1528 on them. You're still tracking them.

1529 Mr. Dorsey. I don't believe that's the case. But happy  
1530 to follow up with you with our team.

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1531 Ms. Castor. Okay, and let's do that because I am out of  
1532 time. Thank you.

1533 The Chairman. The chair now recognizes the chairman of the  
1534 Republican Conference, the gentlelady from Washington State,  
1535 Cathy McMorris Rodgers, for four minutes.

1536 Mrs. McMorris Rodgers. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank  
1537 you, Mr. Dorsey, for joining us today. I want to start off by  
1538 saying that I think Twitter is a valuable tool in modern  
1539 communication and it's why, back in 2011, I was spearheading an  
1540 effort to get our members signed up and using this tool.

1541 I think it's a great way to interact with the people that  
1542 we represent and since then it's been amazing to see the growth  
1543 of Twitter and the Twitter users all across America and the world.

1544 It's why I think this hearing is so timely. There's a lot  
1545 of serious questions that Americans have regarding tech platforms  
1546 and the ones that they're using every day and the issues like  
1547 data privacy, community standards, and censorship.

1548 Today, I want to focus on Twitter's procedures for taking  
1549 down offensive and inappropriate content. And as you know,  
1550 there's been examples that were already shared today.

1551 I was going to highlight the one with Meghan McCain with  
1552 the altered image of a gun pointed at her when she was mourning

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1553 her father's loss, and the tweet image said, "America, this one's  
1554 for you."

1555 Obviously, this offensive tweet was reported by other users,  
1556 even to you, I understood. Yet, it took nearly 16 hours for there  
1557 to be action to take it down.

1558 So I just wanted to ask, first, do you think that this is  
1559 a violation of Twitter's content policies and rules against  
1560 violence and physical harm and that I would also like to understand  
1561 how much of this is driven by the algorithm versus human content  
1562 managers?

1563 Mr. Dorsey. So it definitely is a violation and we were  
1564 slow to act. The tweet was actually up for five hours, but five  
1565 hours way too long, and we build -- our current model works in  
1566 terms of removing content based on reports that we receive and  
1567 we don't believe that that is fair, ultimately. We don't believe  
1568 that we should put the burden of reporting abuse or harassment  
1569 on the victim of it.

1570 We need to build algorithms to Proactively look for when  
1571 these things are occurring and take action. So the number of  
1572 abuse reports that we get is a number that we would like to see  
1573 go down not only because there's less abuse on the platform but  
1574 because our algorithms are recognizing these things before

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1575 someone has to report them and that is our goal, and it will take  
1576 some time. And meanwhile, while we --

1577 Mrs. McMorris Rodgers. Can you talk to me then just about  
1578 what are your current policies? What are the current policies  
1579 for prioritizing timely take downs and enforcement?

1580 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. So any sort of violent threat or image  
1581 is at the top of our priority list in order to review and enforce,  
1582 and we do have a prioritization mechanism for tweets as we get  
1583 the reports.

1584 But, obviously, this one was too slow and is not as precise  
1585 as it needs to be. In this particular case, the reason why was  
1586 because it was captured within an image rather than the tweet  
1587 text itself.

1588 Mrs. McMorris Rodgers. So I think much of the concern  
1589 surrounding this incident and some others has been how long it  
1590 takes to remove the content when there's a clear violation, and  
1591 the issue only seemed to be resolve after people publicly tweeted  
1592 about it, providing a larger platform for this type of content  
1593 than it ever should have had.

1594 So I did want to hear what steps the company is going to  
1595 be taking to speed up its response time to future ones to ensure  
1596 these kind of incidences don't continue.

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1597 Mr. Dorsey. In the short term, we need to do a better job  
1598 at prioritizing around the reports we receive, and this is  
1599 independent of what people see or report to us on the platform.

1600 And in the longer term, we need to take the burden away from  
1601 the victim from having to report it in the first place.

1602 Mrs. McMorris Rodgers. Okay. Well, clearly, you hold a  
1603 large amount of power in the public discourse. Allowing speech  
1604 that incites violence could have devastating consequences and  
1605 this is one way where I believe it's very important that Twitter  
1606 take action to help restore trust with the people and your  
1607 platform.

1608 So and with that, I will yield back my time.

1609 The Chairman. The gentlelady yields back.

1610 The chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland, Mr.  
1611 Sarbanes, for four minutes.

1612 Mr. Sarbanes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1613 Mr. Dorsey, thank you for coming. There are a number of  
1614 important topics that we could be discussing with you today but,  
1615 unfortunately, the Republican majority has decided to pursue the  
1616 trumped-up notion that there is a special conservative bias at  
1617 work in the way Twitter operates, and that's a shame.

1618 What worries me is this is all part of a campaign by the

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1619 GOP and the right wing to work the refs -- complaining of  
1620 non-existent bias to force and over correction, which then can  
1621 result in some actual bias going in the other direction, and we  
1622 saw this actually with Facebook.

1623           Conservatives cried bias because Facebook was seeking to  
1624 make information available using reputable news sources instead  
1625 of far right-wing outlets or conspiracy platforms. So Facebook  
1626 got pushed into this correction and it got rid of its human editors  
1627 and the result was immediately it was overrun with hoaxes that  
1628 were posing as news.

1629           I actually have questions about the subject of the hearing  
1630 but I am going to submit those for the record and ask for written  
1631 responses because I don't really have confidence that this hearing  
1632 was convened for a serious purpose, to be candid.

1633           Like I said, I think it's just a chance to work the ref to  
1634 push platforms like yours away from the serious task of empowering  
1635 people with good and reliable information.

1636           But what is really frustrating to me about today's inquiry  
1637 is that my Republican colleagues know there are plenty of other  
1638 kinds of investigations that we should be undertaking in this  
1639 Congress but they don't have any interest in pursuing them.

1640           And that's not just conjecture. There's actually a list

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1641 that's been circulating that Republicans put together of all the  
1642 investigations that they've been blocking, sweeping under the  
1643 rug because they want to hide the truth from the American people.

1644           And this spreadsheet which is going around is pretty telling.  
1645           It's circulating in Republican circles. So what are these  
1646 things that they know could and should be investigated but they  
1647 are determined to dismiss or bury or ignore altogether?

1648           According to their own secret cover-up list, Republicans  
1649 don't want the public to see President Trump's tax returns. They  
1650 don't want the public to know about Trump's business dealings  
1651 with Russia.

1652           They're determined not to investigate Secretary of Treasury  
1653 Steven Mnuchin's business dealings. They're blocking public  
1654 inquiry into the personal email use of White House staff.

1655           They're wilfully ignoring how taxpayer money has been wasted  
1656 by corrupt cabinet secretaries for first class travel, private  
1657 jets, large security details, office expenses, and other misused  
1658 perks.

1659           They're giving the president a pass on investigation into  
1660 the motives behind his travel ban and his family separation  
1661 policy.

1662           They definitely don't want the public to see how poorly the

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1663 Trump White House responded to Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico  
1664 and, finally, they don't want the public to see how the  
1665 administration is failing to protect our elections and guard  
1666 against hacking attempts.

1667           These are all things that deserve attention and inquiry of  
1668 this Congress. But the Republicans are not going to let it  
1669 happen.

1670           Let me just go back in the last 40 seconds and talk about  
1671 election security because we are 60 days away from the mid-term  
1672 election. We know there are ongoing efforts to disrupt our  
1673 democracy. We know these same actors, these foreign and hostile  
1674 actors, are using this very platform -- Twitter and others --  
1675 to sow discord.

1676           We know the public is desperate that their representatives  
1677 -- that's us -- will act to protect their democracy and we know,  
1678 thanks to this list, that the Republicans know they should be  
1679 investigating our nation's election security and hacking attempts  
1680 by hostile actors.

1681           Instead, here we are, using our precious resources to feed  
1682 Deep State conspiracy theories preferred by the president and  
1683 his allies in Congress. It's a shame that this committee,  
1684 frankly, has been drawn into such a charade.

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1685 I yield back my time.

1686 The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired.

1687 The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Mississippi,  
1688 chair of the Oversight Subcommittee, Mr. Harper, for four minutes.

1689 Mr. Harper. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr.  
1690 Dorsey, for taking this time to be here. It's a very important  
1691 topic.

1692 We all utilize Twitter. You have a very daunting task to  
1693 try to work through this. It's a lot, and we've talked a lot  
1694 today about algorithms and, of course, those are really only as  
1695 good as the people who create them, edit them, and guide them,  
1696 and algorithms have to be trained, which means, as you know --  
1697 the feeding them a lot of data.

1698 My understanding is that oversight of machine learning  
1699 algorithms involves examining the data sets or the search results  
1700 to look for that bias. If bias is spotted, then the algorithm  
1701 can be adjusted and retrained.

1702 So I want to understand the oversight that Twitter does of  
1703 its own algorithms. The algorithms that support Twitter's  
1704 algorithmic time line are adjusted, if not daily, almost daily.

1705 Why is that and what are some reasons why the algorithms  
1706 would need to be adjusted daily?

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1707 Mr. Dorsey. So we -- you know, bias in algorithms is a rather  
1708 new field of research within broader artificial intelligence and  
1709 it's something that is certainly new to us as a company as well.

1710 We do have teams who are focused on creating roadmap so that  
1711 we can fully understand best practices for training, data sets,  
1712 and also measuring impartiality of outcomes.

1713 But I will say that we are pretty early in that work. We  
1714 intend to get better much faster but we are very, very early.

1715 We are learning as quickly as possible, as is the industry, on  
1716 how best to do this work and also how best to measure whether  
1717 we are doing the right thing or not.

1718 In terms of why we need to change the signals all the time  
1719 is because we -- when we release some of these models we release  
1720 them in smaller tests and then as they go out to the broader Twitter  
1721 at scale, we discover some unexpected things and those unexpected  
1722 things will lead to questions, which then cause us to look deeper  
1723 at the particular signals that we are using and as we recognize  
1724 that there are any sort of impartiality within the outcome, we  
1725 work to fix. And it is somewhat dependent upon people giving  
1726 us feedback.

1727 Mr. Harper. And those teams that you're talking about,  
1728 those are individuals, correct?

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1729 Mr. Dorsey. They're --

1730 Mr. Harper. That are -- that are employees of Twitter?

1731 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. Yes --

1732 Mr. Harper. And how do you take into account what their  
1733 leanings or their, you know, bias or life story? Does that have  
1734 an input into what they determine is important or what to look  
1735 for, or how do you factor that in?

1736 Mr. Dorsey. It doesn't -- it doesn't have an input that  
1737 we use. The way we judge ourselves ultimately is are the  
1738 algorithms making objective decisions -- our engineers using  
1739 engineering rigor, which is free of bias and free of any action  
1740 that might be aligned with one particular perspective or not.

1741 So --

1742 Mr. Harper. Okay. If I can ask this, because we only have  
1743 a few moments. What are they looking for? What do they look  
1744 for when they're deciding whether or not to make a change?

1745 Mr. Dorsey. They're looking for fairness. They're looking  
1746 for impartiality. They're looking for whether --

1747 Mr. Harper. If I can interrupt must for a moment. Who  
1748 defines fairness? What is that fairness that's determined there  
1749 and -- because your fairness may be different than my definition  
1750 of fairness, depending on what the issue or the interpretation

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1751 of it is.

1752 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. This goes back to those health indicators  
1753 that we are trying to search for. So are we showing, for instance,  
1754 a variety of perspectives or are we creating more echo chambers  
1755 and filter bubbles.

1756 Mr. Harper. And as you looked at the 600,000 users and then  
1757 specifically you were asked earlier about that you -- you said  
1758 you would follow up on the number of Democrats or Republicans  
1759 in the House --

1760 Mr. Dorsey. Where we can determine that.

1761 Mr. Harper. -- so my question is, you know, that's a pretty  
1762 limited, you know, pool. We are talking about 435 members of  
1763 the House.

1764 Do you -- do you have that info and just don't want to discuss  
1765 it or do you have to find that info on how many House members  
1766 there were that were affected?

1767 Mr. Dorsey. We do have the info and we will share it.

1768 Mr. Harper. Can you share it now?

1769 Mr. Dorsey. Yes, we'll share it with you.

1770 Mr. Harper. Can you share it now in your testimony?

1771 Mr. Dorsey. I don't -- I don't have it front of me.

1772 Mr. Harper. Okay. But you will provide it?

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1773 The Chairman. The gentleman's time --

1774 Mr. Harper. Thank you. With that, I yield back my time.

1775 The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired.

1776 The chair now recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr.  
1777 McNerney, or four minutes.

1778 Mr. McNerney. I thank the chairman, and I thank you, Mr.  
1779 Dorsey, for the frankness you have been showing on answering our  
1780 questions.

1781 But this hearing is really a desperate effort to rally the  
1782 Republican base before the November election and to please  
1783 President Trump.

1784 However, there are some real serious issues that we should  
1785 be examining -- for example, targeting. Some social media  
1786 networks have been accused of facilitating discriminatory  
1787 advertising such as housing and employment ads.

1788 So when targeting ads, are advertisers able to exclude  
1789 certain categories of users on Twitter, which would be  
1790 discriminatory?

1791 Mr. Dorsey. I am sorry. Can you -- can you -- for political  
1792 ads or issues ads?

1793 Mr. McNerney. No, for non-political ads. Are advertisers  
1794 able to exclude groups or categories of users?

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1795 Mr. Dorsey. Advertisers are able to build criteria that  
1796 include and exclude folks.

1797 Mr. McNerney. So that could be -- end up being  
1798 discriminatory?

1799 Mr. Dorsey. Perhaps, yes.

1800 Mr. McNerney. Apart from reviewing how ads are targeted,  
1801 does Twitter review how its ads are ultimately delivered and if  
1802 any discriminatory effects occur as a result of its own  
1803 optimization process?

1804 Mr. Dorsey. Yes, we do do regular audits of how our ads  
1805 are targeted and how they're delivered and we work to make sure  
1806 that we have fairness within them.

1807 Mr. McNerney. Sure. Could you briefly describe the  
1808 process that Twitter uses for making changes to algorithms?

1809 Mr. Dorsey. In terms of making changes to ads algorithms,  
1810 we are looking first and foremost at the data test sets.

1811 We run through tests to make sure that we are -- that they're  
1812 performing in the way that we expect with those outcomes and then  
1813 we bring them out to production, which is at scale on the live  
1814 system, and then also we are doing checks to make sure that they  
1815 are consistent with constraints and boundaries that we expect.

1816 Mr. McNerney. Has Twitter ever taken down an ad because

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1817 of potential discriminatory effects -- non-political?

1818 Mr. Dorsey. I will have to follow up with you on that to  
1819 get that information.

1820 Mr. McNerney. Well, it's difficult to know if Twitter's  
1821 platforms are having discriminatory effects because there's no  
1822 real way for watchdog groups to examine what's happening for  
1823 potential biases.

1824 Twitter announced now that it's making political ads  
1825 searchable. How about non-political ads? Is there a way for  
1826 watchdog groups to examine how non-political ads are being  
1827 targeted?

1828 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. Our ads transparency center is  
1829 comprehensive of all ads.

1830 Mr. McNerney. Thank you. Okay, moving on to privacy --  
1831 Twitter's privacy policy states that we believe you should always  
1832 know where your data -- what data we collect from you and how  
1833 we use it and what you should -- and you should have meaning control  
1834 over both.

1835 But most Americans really don't know what's happening with  
1836 their data. There's a saying that if you aren't paying for a  
1837 product that you are their product. Do you agree with that?

1838 Mr. Dorsey. I don't necessarily agree with that. I mean,

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1839 I do believe that we need to make more clear the exchange -- what  
1840 people are trading to get a free service.

1841 I don't think we've done a great job at that, certainly within  
1842 the service, and I do believe that that is important work and  
1843 we should clarify it more.

1844 Mr. McNerney. Is Twitter running educational campaigns to  
1845 inform users about how data is being used?

1846 Mr. Dorsey. Not at the moment, but we should be looking  
1847 at that and also the incentives that we are providing people on  
1848 the platform.

1849 Mr. McNerney. I am going to follow up on some prior  
1850 questions here. If users disable the track mechanism, then does  
1851 Twitter previously -- does Twitter still store previously  
1852 collected data or does it erase it when they ask to be excluded  
1853 when they opt out?

1854 Mr. Dorsey. I believe it's erased. But we'll have to  
1855 follow up with the details.

1856 Mr. McNerney. Okay. And so you will commit to -- can you  
1857 commit to erasing data when people opt out?

1858 Mr. Dorsey. Yes, but let me just make sure I understand  
1859 and we understand the constraints and the ramifications of that.

1860 Mr. McNerney. Okay. Thank you.

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1861 Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

1862 Mr. Harper. [Presiding.] The gentleman yields back.

1863 We will now take a five-minute recess and reconvene in five  
1864 minutes.

1865 [Recess.]

1866 The Chairman. [Presiding.] Our guests will take their  
1867 seats.

1868 If our guests will take their seats and our members, we will  
1869 resume the hearing now, and I recognize the gentleman from New  
1870 Jersey, Mr. Lance, for four minutes for questions.

1871 Mr. Lance. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1872 Mr. Dorsey, I have three areas of questioning. Number one,  
1873 in the Meghan McCain matter, in your opinion would the photo have  
1874 been taken down if those close to the victim, including her  
1875 husband, had not complained to Twitter?

1876 Mr. Dorsey. If it would have been taken down if they had  
1877 not complained?

1878 Mr. Lance. Correct.

1879 Mr. Dorsey. We would have taken it down because we -- I  
1880 imagine we would have received other reports. Our system does  
1881 work today based on reports for take down.

1882 Mr. Lance. Let me say that I think it's the unanimous view

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1883 of this committee that five hours is intolerable and it was  
1884 horribly violent and we are all opposed to this type of violence  
1885 on Twitter, regardless of when it occurs, and certainly we hope  
1886 that you do better in the future.

1887           Number two, you state in your testimony on Page 6, "Bias  
1888 can happen inadvertently due to many factors such as the quality  
1889 of the data used to train our models.

1890           In addition to ensuring that we are not deliberately biasing  
1891 the algorithms, it is our responsibility to understand, measure,  
1892 and reduce these accidental bias.

1893           The machine learning teams at Twitter at learning about these  
1894 techniques and developing a roadmap to ensure our present and  
1895 future machine learning models uphold a high standard when it  
1896 comes to algorithmic fairness."

1897           Can you give the committee a time frame as to when we might  
1898 expect that that would receive results that are fair to the  
1899 American people, conservatives and perhaps liberals as well?

1900           Mr. Dorsey. I can't predict a very precise time frame at  
1901 the moment. This is something that is a high priority for us  
1902 in terms of as we roll out algorithms understanding that they  
1903 are fair and that we are driving impartial outcomes.

1904           But it's hard to predict a particular time frame because

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1905 this is not just a Twitter issue. This is the entire industry  
1906 and a field of research within artificial intelligence.

1907 Mr. Lance. I was asked on air in New York over the weekend  
1908 whether this will require regulation by the federal government.

1909 After all, we are a committee of jurisdiction in this regard.

1910

1911 I certainly hope not, but I am sure you can understand, Mr.  
1912 Dorsey, that we would like this to occur as quickly as possible  
1913 because of the great concern of the American people that there  
1914 not be bias, intentional or unintentional.

1915 Mr. Dorsey. I do believe you're asking the important  
1916 questions, especially as we move more of our decisions not just  
1917 as a company but also as individuals to artificial intelligence  
1918 and we need to understand as we use this artificial intelligence  
1919 for more and more of the things that we do that, number one, that  
1920 there are unbiased outcomes and, number two, that they can explain  
1921 why they made the decision in the first place.

1922 Mr. Lance. Thank you, Mr. Dorsey.

1923 And then my third area of questioning, prior to 2016 did  
1924 Twitter have any policies in place to address the use of the  
1925 Twitter platform by foreign governments or entities for the  
1926 purpose of influencing an election in the United States?

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1927 I am certainly as concerned as any member of this committee,  
1928 regardless of political party, about what happened regarding  
1929 Russia in 2016. And so prior to 2016, did you have any policies  
1930 in place?

1931 Mr. Dorsey. We can follow up with you. I don't have that  
1932 data right now in terms of what policies against foreign actors  
1933 that we had before 2016. But we did learn a lot within the 2016  
1934 elections that impacted both our technology and also the policies  
1935 going forward.

1936 Mr. Lance. Let me state that I do not believe this is a  
1937 partisan matter. This is a bipartisan matter. It is intolerable  
1938 that there was any interference and, of course, we hope that it  
1939 never occurs again.

1940 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

1941 The Chairman. The gentleman yields back.

1942 The chair recognizes the gentleman from Vermont, Mr. Welch,  
1943 for four minutes.

1944 Mr. Welch. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

1945 There's really two hearings going on. One is about that  
1946 man in the White House who has been accusing, as you have been  
1947 sitting here, the social media giants of interfering in the  
1948 election and making this claim even as you were testifying and,

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1949 in fact, recently said that the media giants were all in favor  
1950 of Hillary Clinton in the election.

1951 I will just give you a chance to ask whether the company  
1952 Twitter had a -- had a policy of the company for either candidate  
1953 in the presidential election.

1954 Mr. Dorsey. No, we did not.

1955 Mr. Welch. Absolutely not, I expect, right?

1956 The second is a job that we are not doing. We are having  
1957 Mr. Dorsey here and it's a good opportunity, given his experience  
1958 in his company. But these social media platforms are being abused  
1959 in some cases and there's efforts that are being made at Twitter  
1960 -- we had Mr. Zuckerberg here some time ago -- efforts being made  
1961 at Facebook to deal with false accounts, to deal with hate speech,  
1962 which you're trying to deal with, to deal with flat-out false  
1963 information, which is not the kind of thing you want on the digital  
1964 town square, right?

1965 But the fundamental question that this committee refuses  
1966 to ask itself is whether there's a role for publicly-elected  
1967 officials to make some of these decisions about how you protect  
1968 people from hate speech, how you protect people from flat-out  
1969 false information.

1970 Now, you mentioned, Mr. Dorsey, that your company is

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1971 investigating this. You have got your team working on it, and  
1972 that's a good thing.

1973 But bottom line, do you believe that this should be something  
1974 that's decided company by company or should we have rules of the  
1975 road and a process that is monitored by elected officials in a  
1976 regulatory agency. That's the question we are coming to.

1977 As Mr. Harper earlier, I thought, asked a very good question  
1978 -- what you determine to be fair or I determine to be fair, we  
1979 may disagree. So who's going to be the decider of that?

1980 Do you believe that ultimately it should be a decision on  
1981 these important questions of privacy, on these important  
1982 questions of hate speech, on these important matters you're trying  
1983 to contend with about the abuse of your platform should be decided  
1984 on a company by company basis or should that be a public discussion  
1985 and a public decision made by elected representatives?

1986 Mr. Dorsey. First, we want to make it a public discussion.  
1987 We -- this health and increasing health in the public space is  
1988 not something we want to compete on. We don't want to have the  
1989 only healthy public square.

1990 We want to contribute to all healthy public conversation.  
1991 Independent of what the government believes it should do, we  
1992 are going to continue to make this our singular objective --

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1993 Mr. Welch. Right.

1994 Mr. Dorsey. -- because we believe it's right and we are  
1995 going to continue to share our approach and our work so that others  
1996 can learn from it and we are going to learn from others.

1997 So I do believe that we have worked a lot more closely with  
1998 our peers in order to solve some of these common issues that we  
1999 are seeing and we'll come up with common solutions, as long as  
2000 we all have a mind set of this is not an area for us to compete.

2001 Mr. Welch. It's not an area to compete but it's also  
2002 ultimately as responsible and you and other companies want to  
2003 be, which I grant you you do.

2004 Ultimately, there will be a debate between the president  
2005 and his vision of what is fair and perhaps my vision of what is  
2006 fair, and in the past, what we've had, we now have the FCC, the  
2007 FTC, that basically were designed to address problems when we  
2008 used dial-up telephones, and this committee has not done anything  
2009 to address the jurisdictional issues and public policy questions  
2010 and I do not believe that we should just be leaving it to the  
2011 responsibility of private companies. But I appreciate the  
2012 efforts the private companies are making.

2013 And I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr.  
2014 Dorsey.

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2015 The Chairman. Gentlemen. The chair now recognizes the  
2016 gentleman from Texas, Mr. Olson, for four minutes.

2017 Mr. Olson. I thank the chair and welcome Mr. Dorsey.

2018 You mentioned in your opening statement the group called  
2019 the Trust and Safety Council within Twitter.

2020 On Twitter's BOG, it relies on the Trust and Safety Council  
2021 for guidance in evaluating and developing its own community  
2022 guidelines, to use your words from your statement, to create that  
2023 public square for a free exchange of ideas.

2024 And you have been pretty honest about your personal biases  
2025 and the biases of people within Twitter. How pervasive are the  
2026 biases on the Trust and Safety Council?

2027 Mr. Dorsey. Well, just for some context, our Trust and  
2028 Safety Council is a external organization of about 40  
2029 organizations that are global and are focused on particular issues  
2030 such as online harassment or bullying or misinformation.

2031 So these are entities that help us give feedback on our  
2032 policies and also our solutions that we are coming up with but  
2033 we take no direction from.

2034 Mr. Olson. Are these entities either Republican, Democrat,  
2035 Tea Party, Green Party? Any identity with their affiliation  
2036 politically that comes into Twitter's world?

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2037 Mr. Dorsey. We do have some conservative-leaning  
2038 organizations but we don't -- we don't add to the council based  
2039 on ideology. It's on the issues.

2040 Mr. Olson. And I am sure this council in Twitter does not  
2041 operate in this Twitter vote of secrecy a vacuum. What other  
2042 groups outside of this group help Twitter influence your  
2043 developing and shaping your community guidelines? Anybody else  
2044 out there besides this Trust and Safety Council you rely upon?

2045 Mr. Dorsey. Well, the Trust and Safety Council is advisory.  
2046 It makes no decisions for us. Most of our decisions are made  
2047 internally and we definitely take input from external folks and  
2048 we look at what's happening in more of the secular trends of what's  
2049 going on. But we don't take direction from anything external.

2050 Mr. Olson. Could we list those members of that council --  
2051 the Trust and Advisory Council, those 40 entities that are your  
2052 members -- Safety Council -- sorry, Trust and Safety Council?

2053 Mr. Dorsey. They are listed on our web page.

2054 Mr. Olson. Okay.

2055 Mr. Dorsey. So we have an accurate list of those and we  
2056 can send you --

2057 Mr. Olson. I apologize. I will look that up. I also want  
2058 to turn to back home, and as you probably heard, a little more

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2059 than a year ago southeast Texas was fighting four feet of water  
2060 from floods from Hurricane Harvey.

2061 A recent report from my alma mater, Rice University,  
2062 highlights how platforms like Twitter played an important role  
2063 in natural disasters and recovery.

2064 The report showed the increased use of mobile devices  
2065 combined with social media platforms have empowered everyday  
2066 citizens to report dangerous situations and lifesaving  
2067 operations. They can see people in trouble and report that very  
2068 quickly.

2069 How does Twitter prioritize emergency services information  
2070 during disasters? Like, for example, if Harvey comes up and hits  
2071 us -- another Harvey within a month or so, because it's hurricane  
2072 season?

2073 Mr. Dorsey. We do prioritize community outreach and  
2074 emergency services on the platform. We actually do have some  
2075 really good evidence of this specifically with Harvey. So we  
2076 saw about 27 million tweets regarding Hurricane Harvey.

2077 In Texas, 911 systems failed and people did use Twitter to  
2078 issue SOS calls and we saw as many as 10,000 people rescued from  
2079 this.

2080 So this is something that we do prioritize and want to make

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2081 sure that we are working with local agencies to make sure that  
2082 we have a lot strength there.

2083 Mr. Olson. Thank you, and close by recognizing that as a  
2084 fan of the St. Louis Cardinals and a high-tech leader, I will  
2085 forgive you for your Cardinals hacking into my Astros accounts.  
2086 They hacked into my Astros accounts. We won the World Series.  
2087 Thank you, St. Louis Cardinals.

2088 I yield back.

2089 Mr. Dorsey. Thank you. Go Cards.

2090 The Chairman. The gentleman yields back.

2091 The chair now recognizes the gentleman from New Mexico for  
2092 four minutes -- Mr. Lujan.

2093 Mr. Lujan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2094 Mr. Dorsey, thank you for being here today as well.

2095 Mr. Dorsey, yes or no -- is it correct that President Trump  
2096 lost followers because your platform decided to eliminate bots  
2097 and fake accounts?

2098 Mr. Dorsey. Yes.

2099 Mr. Lujan. During the initial purge of bots, who lost more  
2100 followers, President Trump or former President Obama?

2101 Mr. Dorsey. I am not sure of those details. But there was  
2102 a broad based action across all of Twitter.

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2103 Mr. Lujan. Subject to confirmation, do these numbers sound  
2104 familiar -- President Obama lost 2.3 million followers, President  
2105 Trump lost, roughly, 320,000 followers?

2106 Mr. Dorsey. I would need to confirm that.

2107 Mr. Lujan. That's what's been reported.

2108 So, Mr. Dorsey, based on that, is it correct that Twitter  
2109 is engaged in a conspiracy against former President Barack Obama?

2110 Mr. Dorsey. I don't believe we have any conspiracies  
2111 against the former president.

2112 Mr. Lujan. I don't either. I don't think you have them  
2113 against this president. I want to commend you on your work with  
2114 what was done associated with the evaluation following the 2016  
2115 election, which led to some of this work.

2116 In your testimony, you note that Twitter conducted a  
2117 comprehensive review of platform activity related to the 2016  
2118 election.

2119 I assume that after your preview, you felt that Twitter had  
2120 a responsibility to make changes to the way your platform operates  
2121 to address future attempts at election manipulation. Is that  
2122 correct?

2123 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. We are working and this is our number-one  
2124 priority to help protect the integrity of 2018 elections.

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2125           Mr. Lujan. Further, Mr. Dorsey -- and Mr. Chairman, I would  
2126 ask unanimous consent to submit three articles into the record  
2127 -- one from January 19th, recode.net, cnbc.com, April 5th, 2018,  
2128 and from techcrunch.com, August 21st, 2018.

2129           The Chairman. Without objection.

2130           [The information follows:]

2131

2132 \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT 5\*\*\*\*\*

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2133 Mr. Lujan. The first article, Mr. Dorsey, says that Twitter  
2134 admits that there were more Russian trolls on its site during  
2135 the 2016 U.S. presidential election as reported by recode.net,  
2136 January 1, 2018.

2137 Is that correct? Was this a revelation that Twitter shared?

2138 Mr. Dorsey. Yes.

2139 Mr. Lujan. Did that lead to some -- was that an outcome  
2140 of the -- some of the research?

2141 Mr. Dorsey. That was an outcome of the continued work as  
2142 we dug deeper into the numbers in 2016.

2143 Mr. Lujan. Mr. Dorsey, is it also correct as was reported  
2144 by CNBC on April 5th, 2018, that Twitter has suspended more than  
2145 1.2 million terrorism-related accounts since late 2015?

2146 Mr. Dorsey. Correct. Yes.

2147 Mr. Lujan. How did that work come about?

2148 Mr. Dorsey. We have -- we have been working for years to  
2149 automatically identify terrorist accounts and terrorist-like  
2150 activity from violent extremist groups and automatically shutting  
2151 that down, and that has been ongoing work for years.

2152 Mr. Lujan. I would hope that this committee would commend  
2153 your work in closing those accounts.

2154 Lastly, Mr. Dorsey, Facebook and Twitter removed hundreds

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2155 of accounts linked to Iranian and Russian political meddling.

2156 This was reported August 21st, 2018. Is that correct?

2157 Mr. Dorsey. Yes.

2158 Mr. Lujan. So, Mr. Dorsey, are you aware of any significant  
2159 legislation that Congress has passed to protect our democracy  
2160 and our elections?

2161 Mr. Dorsey. I am not aware.

2162 Mr. Lujan. The reason you're not aware is because none of  
2163 it is -- it's not happened. We've not done anything in this  
2164 Congress.

2165 Mr. Dorsey, after it was revealed that 87 million Facebook  
2166 users' data was improperly shared with Cambridge Analytica, this  
2167 committee heard testimony from Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg.  
2168 This was in April of this year. It's now September.

2169 Are you aware of any significant privacy legislation that  
2170 passed this committee since Mr. Zuckerberg's testimony?

2171 Mr. Dorsey. No.

2172 Mr. Lujan. Again, nothing has happened.

2173 Mr. Chairman, we've not done anything as well for the 148  
2174 million people that were impacted by Equifax. I think we should  
2175 use this committee's time to make a difference in the lives of  
2176 the American people and live up to the commitments that this

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2177 committee has made to provide protections for our consumers.

2178 I yield back.

2179 The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired.

2180 The chair now recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia,  
2181 Mr. McKinley, for four minutes.

2182 Mr. McKinley. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr.  
2183 Dorsey, for coming today.

2184 Earlier this year, and we just referred to it in testimony,  
2185 the FDA commissioner, Scott Gottlieb, reported that there were,  
2186 quote, "offers to sell illegal drugs all over social media,  
2187 including Twitter, and the easy availability in online purchases  
2188 of these products from illegal drug peddlers is rampant and fuels  
2189 the opioid crisis," closed quote.

2190 Now, Mr. Dorsey, do you believe that your -- Twitter's  
2191 platform and your controls has contributed to fuelling the opioid  
2192 crisis?

2193 Mr. Dorsey. Well, first and foremost, we do have strong  
2194 terms of service that prevent this activity and we are taking  
2195 enforcement actions when we see it.

2196 Mr. McKinley. Okay. Well, there was a recent study just  
2197 published by the American Journal of Public Health that analysed  
2198 over a five-month period of time the Twitter accounts and went

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2199 through several thousands -- hundreds of thousands of those and  
2200 found that there were still 2,000 illegal drug sites being sold  
2201 on your -- on your account.

2202 Do you think that -- so my curiosity now from -- now that  
2203 we have this report in our hand about the 2,000 -- do you think  
2204 that -- your website states that this is prohibited.

2205 It's against your standards and you just said that. Can  
2206 you tell me how many of these sites are still up?

2207 Mr. Dorsey. I can't -- I can't tell you. I would have to  
2208 follow up with you on the exact data.

2209 Mr. McKinley. But they shouldn't be up, right?

2210 Mr. Dorsey. They shouldn't be. It is prohibited activity.

2211 Mr. McKinley. If I could, just within the last hour -- Mr.  
2212 Dorsey, within the last hour here's an ad for cocaine on Twitter.

2213 It's still up, and it goes on and it says that, you know, not  
2214 only from that -- on that site they can buy cocaine, heroin, meth,  
2215 Ecstasy, Percocet. I would be ashamed if I were you, and you  
2216 say this is against your public policy and you have got ways of  
2217 being able to filter that out and it's still getting on there.

2218 So I am astounded that that information is still there.

2219 And then we have the next commercial. This is on -- this  
2220 is one on cocaine. Here's the next one, that here you can get

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2221 -- contact us for any medicine you want.

2222           That doesn't say you have to have a prescription. Contact  
2223 these people, and it's on your site and you said you have got  
2224 ways of checking that. Just within the last hour it's still up  
2225 there.

2226           We ran into the same problem with Facebook and Zuckerberg  
2227 came back to me within two hours later and it had all come down.  
2228 They took them off. They weren't aware. They had missed it.  
2229 Their algorithm had missed it.

2230           I am hoping that in the hours after this hearing you will  
2231 get back to us and tell us that these are down as well -- that  
2232 you're serious about this opioid epidemic.

2233           I just happen to come from a state that's very hard hit with  
2234 this. We don't need to have our social media promoting the use  
2235 of illegal drugs in our children and our families.

2236           So I hope I hear from you that you will be taking them down.  
2237 Is that a fair statement?

2238           Mr. Dorsey. Yes. I agree with you this is unacceptable  
2239 and we will -- we will act.

2240           Mr. McKinley. I would also hope that you would move the  
2241 same resources that have complicated so much of what this hearing  
2242 has been about today so that you can focus on this to make sure

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2243 that this doesn't happen again -- that we wouldn't have to  
2244 reprimand you to follow the guidelines that you have published  
2245 and you're so proud about that you have the ways of stopping opioid  
2246 sales. But it's not happening.

2247 So please take a good hard look at it and be serious about  
2248 this this next time.

2249 Thank you very much. I yield back.

2250 Mr. Dorsey. Thank you.

2251 The Chairman. The gentleman yields back.

2252 The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Iowa, Mr.  
2253 Loeb sack, for four minutes for questions.

2254 Mr. Loeb sack. I thank the chairman and ranking member for  
2255 having this oversight hearing today and I thank you, Mr. Dorsey,  
2256 for being here. You have exhibited a lot of patience, you have  
2257 been very diplomatic and I commend you for that.

2258 And there have been a lot of great issues brought up, you  
2259 know, with what our most recent colleague here from West Virginia  
2260 mentioned. I think that's a very, very important issue.

2261 It's something that's affecting rural America as well as  
2262 urban America as well, where I am from, and I think it -- I think  
2263 this discussion today has really has demonstrated how important  
2264 Twitter is to our national conversation -- the good, the bad,

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2265 the ugly, all of it -- and for our democracy and I am glad we  
2266 are shining a light on many issues of concern of Americans across  
2267 the country with regard to Twitter and the role it plays in our  
2268 society today and will continue to play into the future,  
2269 obviously.

2270           And many of my colleagues have raised legitimate concerns  
2271 about data privacy, the influence of hostile actors in our  
2272 elections and the spread of misinformation that can distort and  
2273 harm our very democracy.

2274           I think these are all important issues, but I want to for  
2275 a second on the issue of online harassment and the use of Twitter  
2276 by teenagers -- by young people.

2277           Social media use among the under 18 population continues  
2278 to increase, as you know, and while reaching online communities  
2279 may allow young people to find friendship and community in ways  
2280 we cannot have imagined growing up -- I certainly wouldn't have  
2281 imagined -- Twitter may also be creating unimaginable crises for  
2282 many kids, as I am sure you're aware.

2283           Social media in general and Twitter specifically has been  
2284 used frequently for abusive purposes like harassment and cyber  
2285 bullying, and Twitter has too often been too slow to respond when  
2286 victims report abuse and harassment.

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2287           These interactions which adults might view as merely  
2288 stressful and hurtful when we look at our Twitter account or things  
2289 that are said that might hurt our feelings, whatever the case  
2290 may be, for young people these can be devastating, as we know,  
2291 because they're still developing and often place large importance  
2292 on their reputations with their peers.

2293           We've seen too many tragic stories of what can happen when  
2294 individuals move -- feel moved to harm themselves in response  
2295 to online harassment and it should be a goal of all of us to stop  
2296 that kind of bullying.

2297           So, Mr. Dorsey, my first question is, as part of the  
2298 healthiness of conversations on Twitter, are you making any  
2299 specific changes to the experience of your youngest users?

2300           Mr. Dorsey. Yes. We agree with all your points and this  
2301 is one of our areas of focus is around harassment in particular  
2302 and how it is used and weaponized as a tool to silence others,  
2303 and the most important thing for us is that we need to be able  
2304 to measure our progress around it and understand if we are actually  
2305 making any progress whatsoever. So --

2306           Mr. Loeb sack. There is a minimum age of 13. Is that correct  
2307 that you're --

2308           Mr. Dorsey. Yes.

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2309 Mr. Loeb sack. -- now trying to enforce?

2310 Mr. Dorsey. Yes.

2311 Mr. Loeb sack. Does Twitter put any safety checks on the  
2312 accounts of teenage users?

2313 Mr. Dorsey. We do have -- we do have various safety checks  
2314 and we can follow up with your team on that.

2315 Mr. Loeb sack. That would be good. Does Twitter do anything  
2316 to look for indications of harmful or dangerous interactions,  
2317 specifically?

2318 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. Yes.

2319 Mr. Loeb sack. It'd be good to know that. I appreciate that  
2320 -- what those are specifically. Has Twitter conducted any  
2321 research with outside independent organizations to determine how  
2322 it can best combat online harassment, bullying, or other harmful  
2323 interactions either for children or teenagers or for other groups  
2324 of people?

2325 Mr. Dorsey. We do this through our Trust and Safety Council.  
2326 So we do have an organization that represents youth on digital  
2327 platforms.

2328 Mr. Loeb sack. And will you commit to publishing a discreet  
2329 review with outside organizations to help evaluate what more  
2330 Twitter can be doing to protect our kids?

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2331 Mr. Dorsey. We haven't yet, but we will certainly work with  
2332 our partners to consider this.

2333 Mr. Loeb sack. Because I think your three principles --  
2334 impartiality, transparency, and accountability -- I think we can  
2335 put those into effect and operationalize those when it comes to  
2336 these particular questions that I've asked you.

2337 And so I really do appreciate your time and we can -- we  
2338 can expect such a review to be provided to the public then in  
2339 the future?

2340 Mr. Dorsey. Yes.

2341 Mr. Loeb sack. Okay. Thank you very much for your time,  
2342 and I yield back, Mr. Chair.

2343 Mr. Dorsey. Thank you.

2344 The Chairman. I thank the gentleman from Iowa.

2345 I recognize the gentleman from Kentucky, Mr. Guthrie, for  
2346 four minutes.

2347 Mr. Guthrie. Thank you very much. I am here. Thank you  
2348 for being here today. I appreciate it.

2349 I've had to manage the floor debates. I've been over in  
2350 the Capitol Building most of the afternoon. I apologize. It  
2351 was a conflict of scheduling.

2352 But glad to be here, and I know that I missed some of your

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2353 answers and some of the -- what we've talked about previously.

2354 But I want to further go down the path of -- on a couple of things.

2355

2356 But many of my constituents who use Twitter perceive it to  
2357 be an open market of ideas that you have referred to in your  
2358 testimony, and we are obviously here today because some questions  
2359 have been raised about the rules for posting content and whether  
2360 some viewpoints are restricted in practice -- specifically,  
2361 political conservatives.

2362 So I will come to a question of editorial judgment, but one  
2363 major issue for my constituents start with transparency and how  
2364 their data is being collected and used by Twitter.

2365 I understand you have spoken about data a few times already  
2366 this afternoon. So to build on those previous questions asked  
2367 by my colleagues, what specific data points are collected on  
2368 Twitter users and with whom do you share them?

2369 Mr. Dorsey. So we infer interest around usage. So when  
2370 people follow particular accounts that represent interests in  
2371 basketball or politics, for instance, we can utilize that  
2372 information to introduce them to new tweets that might be similar  
2373 or accounts that might be similar as well.

2374 So a lot of our inference of that data is interest. This

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2375 is all viewable within the settings of the app so you can see  
2376 all the interests that we've inferred about you within the  
2377 settings and you can also turn them off or delete them.

2378 Mr. Guthrie. Is that shared with outside parties?

2379 Mr. Dorsey. It's not.

2380 Mr. Guthrie. It's not shared? So it's only used by  
2381 Twitter?

2382 Mr. Dorsey. Yeah.

2383 Mr. Guthrie. And how do you obtain consent from users if  
2384 -- so you don't share with any third parties so you don't have  
2385 to go through the consent then? Okay.

2386 When it comes to questions of editorial judgment, and I am  
2387 not an expert on Section 230 but I would like to ask you about  
2388 your thoughts on publisher liability.

2389 Could you comment on what some have said -- that there is  
2390 a certain amount of inherent editorial judgment being carried  
2391 out when Twitter uses artificial intelligence-driven algorithms  
2392 or promotes content through Twitter Moments and the questions  
2393 would be so where should we draw the line on how much editorial  
2394 judgement can be exercised by the owner of a neutral platform  
2395 like Twitter before the platform is considered a publisher?

2396 Mr. Dorsey. Well, we do defend Section 230 because it is

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2397 the thing that enables us to increase the health in the first  
2398 place. It enables us to look at the content and look for abuse  
2399 and take enforcement actions against them accordingly.

2400 We do have a section of the service called Moments where  
2401 we do have curators who are looking through all of the relevant  
2402 tweets for a particular event or a topic and arranging them and  
2403 they use a internal guideline to make sure that we are  
2404 representative of as many perspectives as possible, going back  
2405 to that concept of variety of perspective.

2406 We want to see a balanced view of what people think about  
2407 a particular issue. Not all of them will be as balanced as others  
2408 but that's how they measure themselves against. But it is one  
2409 area that people can choose to use or ignore altogether.

2410 Mr. Guthrie. Okay. Thanks. And then finally, I have 52  
2411 seconds left -- some people say and I've heard some people say  
2412 that Twitter could be classified as a media outlet due to certain  
2413 content agreements you may have now or consider in the future.

2414 Do you have any comment on that?

2415 Mr. Dorsey. I don't think the -- you know, the broader  
2416 categories are necessarily useful. We do see our role as serving  
2417 conversation. Like, we do see our product as a conversational  
2418 product, a communication product, and we do see a lot of people

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2419 use Twitter to get the news because we believe that news is a  
2420 by-product of public conversation and allows to see a much broader  
2421 view of what's currently happening and what's going on.

2422 So that's what we are focussing on is how do people use us  
2423 rather than these categories. We do have partnerships where we  
2424 stream events like this one -- this one is live on Twitter right  
2425 now -- where people can have a conversation about and everyone  
2426 can benefit and engage in that conversation accordingly.

2427 Mr. Guthrie. Okay. Thank you. And my time has expired  
2428 and I yield back.

2429 The Chairman. The chair recognizes the gentleman from  
2430 Massachusetts, Mr. Kennedy, for four minutes.

2431 Mr. Kennedy. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2432 Mr. Dorsey, thanks so much for being here. Thank you for  
2433 your -- over here -- thank you for your patience. I know you  
2434 were over on the Senate side earlier today. So thank you for  
2435 enduring all these long hours of questioning.

2436 I wanted to kind of just make sure we were clear on a couple  
2437 things. One, you have talked at length -- I will get into a little  
2438 bit more detail -- about the mechanisms that you use to look at  
2439 different aspects of content on the site.

2440 But you have also talked about how you're algorithms have

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2441 -- are a bit imperfect -- how they have impacted some members  
2442 of this body, Democrats and Republicans. Is that true?

2443 Mr. Dorsey. Yes.

2444 Mr. Kennedy. And you have also indicated that there are  
2445 others that get caught up in that, liberal activists that use  
2446 perhaps profane language in response to political leaders. Is  
2447 that true?

2448 Mr. Dorsey. That may or may not be a signal that we use  
2449 in terms of the content. We tend to favor more of the behavior  
2450 that we are seeing and that's what I was describing in terms of  
2451 the signal was the behavior of the people following these  
2452 accounts.

2453 Mr. Kennedy. Fair enough. You yourself were actually  
2454 suspended at a time. Was that not true?

2455 Mr. Dorsey. I was.

2456 Mr. Kennedy. So fair to say that sometimes that --

2457 Mr. Dorsey. There are errors. There are errors.

2458 Mr. Kennedy. Yes, there are, unless you engage in that  
2459 destructive behavior of your own site, which you did not, right?

2460 Mr. Dorsey. I am sorry?

2461 Mr. Kennedy. Unless you engaged in that own destructive  
2462 behavior that you were talking about, which I don't think you

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2463 did.

2464 Mr. Dorsey. Correct.

2465 Mr. Kennedy. Right. So you have talked about essentially  
2466 depending on those automated tools and then individual users to  
2467 report tweets, behavior, one of these horrifying instances with  
2468 Ms. McCain.

2469 But that's basically that the self-regulation mechanisms  
2470 that you all use, right?

2471 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. Our model currently depends upon reports  
2472 to remove content or to remove accounts.

2473 Mr. Kennedy. And why is it that you depend on those reports  
2474 rather than having a more robust network within your company to  
2475 do that? Why is it you -- that you basically outsource that to  
2476 users?

2477 Mr. Dorsey. Well, we don't feel great about this. We don't  
2478 believe that the burden should be on the victim in the first place.

2479 So this is something we'd like to change. We have to build that  
2480 technology and --

2481 Mr. Kennedy. But if you change that, right, if you -- I  
2482 understand you don't feel good about putting that on the victims  
2483 or the observers, but you also expressed a reticence for your  
2484 company to be the arbiter as to what is decent, fair, truth.

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2485           You mentioned the term false fact earlier in your testimony.

2486           I have no idea what a false fact is. But putting that aside  
2487 for a second, how -- it seems like you're trying to basically  
2488 meld this world of outside kind of crowd sourcing what works versus  
2489 internalizing some of it.

2490           I want to try to push you on that in a minute and a half,  
2491 which is not exactly fair. But how -- as you say you're trying  
2492 to fix it, what are you trying to do? What does that look like?

2493           Mr. Dorsey. We are trying to build proactive systems that  
2494 are recognizing behaviors that are against our terms of service  
2495 and take action much faster so that people don't have to report  
2496 them.

2497           Mr. Kennedy. And is that -- one of my Republican colleagues  
2498 asked earlier, I believe, how many folks you have working on that.

2499           You said the issue wasn't so much how many people but you  
2500 deflected that a bit, understanding that, I am certain, technology  
2501 can advance here.

2502           But is that two people? Is it 20 people? Is it 200 people?  
2503 Do you expect to be hiring more here? That's got to be some  
2504 sort of reflection of an area of focus, right?

2505           Mr. Dorsey. Yes. We have hundreds of people working on  
2506 it. But the reason I don't want to focus on that number is because

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2507 we need to have the flexibility to make decision between investing  
2508 to build more new technology or hiring people, and in my experience  
2509 companies naturally just want to grow and that isn't always the  
2510 right answer because it doesn't allow for a lot of scalability.

2511 Mr. Kennedy. All right, sir. Thank you. I yield back.

2512 Mr. Dorsey. Thank you.

2513 The Chairman. The gentleman -- now we recognize the  
2514 gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Kinzinger, for four minutes.

2515 Mr. Kinzinger. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Dorsey, thank  
2516 you again for coming in here. Recognizing that there's multiple  
2517 swords to free speech -- there's good and bad that comes with  
2518 it.

2519 I think it's important to also mention that Twitter as well  
2520 as other social media platforms has been key in liberating  
2521 oppressed people and allowing oppressed people to communicate.

2522 If you look in Syria, although that situation is not good  
2523 over there, people have been able to get their message out. When  
2524 chemical weapons attacks happen, we know about that very quickly  
2525 because government-censored media, which would never report a  
2526 chemical weapons attack, is usurped by Twitter use and Facebook  
2527 and some of these others.

2528 So part of a very big concern with that too is also foreign

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2529 interference in our democracy. We are very concerned -- I am  
2530 very concerned about the role that the Russians played in  
2531 attempting to undermine democracy.

2532 I don't think Russia elected President Trump, but I think  
2533 it's obvious they're trying to sow instability in democracy.  
2534 And so I think the more we can get a grip on this and a grasp  
2535 and make people aware of just the fact of what's happening we  
2536 can begin to inoculate ourselves.

2537 I would like to ask you, though, about Twitter's practices  
2538 with respect to information sharing with foreign governments.

2539

2540 It's a topic I addressed in the Facebook hearing with Mr.  
2541 Zuckerberg and in which I think Senator Rubio broached with you  
2542 a little earlier today.

2543 On September 1st, 2015, Russian Federal Law Number 242-FZ,  
2544 known by many as the data localization law, went into effect.

2545

2546 It requires social media companies offering service to  
2547 Russian citizens to collect and maintain all personal information  
2548 of those citizens on databases physically located in their  
2549 country. Is Twitter in compliance with this law?

2550

Mr. Dorsey. I need to follow up with you on that.

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2551 Mr. Kinzinger. You don't know if you're in compliance with  
2552 that law right now?

2553 Mr. Dorsey. Which law again?

2554 Mr. Kinzinger. It's the Russian Federal Law 242-FZ, which  
2555 requires -- the data localization requires storage of information  
2556 to be kept in Russia. This has been in the news for a couple  
2557 years now so I would hope you would know.

2558 Mr. Dorsey. I don't. I need my team follow up with you  
2559 on that.

2560 Mr. Kinzinger. You got a bunch of people back there. You  
2561 can ask them if I --

2562 Mr. Dorsey. We don't have servers in Russia.

2563 Mr. Kinzinger. You don't -- you do not have them?

2564 Mr. Dorsey. No.

2565 Mr. Kinzinger. Okay. So you're not technically in  
2566 compliance, which I think is good. So that might answer my second  
2567 question -- if you store user data, because there would be concern  
2568 about breaches and everything else in dealing with Russia.

2569 And besides -- and legitimate and well-defined requests for  
2570 data that may aid in the investigation of a crime, does Twitter  
2571 make any user data available to Russian state entities including  
2572 intelligence and security agencies?

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2573 Mr. Dorsey. No.

2574 Mr. Kinzinger. Okay. Let me ask you then -- we've touched  
2575 on this a few times -- with the minute I have left -- parents,  
2576 young adults, teenagers using Twitter.

2577 I think our laws haven't caught up with the new reality,  
2578 the 21st century that we are in. We have to address how technology  
2579 can be used to hurt innocent people.

2580 In Illinois, there's laws to prevent people from  
2581 distributing photos with malicious intent. A fake account can  
2582 be created in a matter of minutes to slander someone and do damage  
2583 and circulate photos.

2584 Mr. Zuckerberg testified before this committee that he --  
2585 that Facebook is responsible for the content on Facebook, which  
2586 I think you can appreciate how newsworthy that was, given the  
2587 longstanding interpretations of Section 230.

2588 Your user agreement clearly states that all content is the  
2589 sole responsibility of the person who originated such content.

2590 You may not monitor or control the content posted via services  
2591 and we cannot take responsibility for the content.

2592 Your corrective actions and the statements you have made  
2593 a little bit seem to be somewhat in conflict with the language.

2594 Can you just take a little bit of time with what we have left

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2595 to clarify your stance on content?

2596 Mr. Dorsey. In what regard?

2597 Mr. Kinzinger. Just, I mean, are users responsible? Is  
2598 Twitter? Is it mixed? What area does Twitter have a  
2599 responsibility or when you step in, why?

2600 Mr. Dorsey. So people are responsible for their content.  
2601 We have made our singular objective to -- as a company to help  
2602 improve the health of the content that we see on the service,  
2603 and for us that means that people are not using content to silence  
2604 others or to harass others or to bully each other so that they  
2605 don't even feel safe to participate in the first place and that  
2606 is what CDA 230 protects us to do is to actually enforce these  
2607 actions -- make them clear to people in our terms of service but  
2608 also to enforce them so that we can take actions.

2609 Mr. Kinzinger. Okay. I am out of time. So I yield.

2610 The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired.

2611 The chair recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr.  
2612 Cardenas, for four minutes.

2613 Mr. Cardenas. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and  
2614 colleagues, for participating in this important matter.

2615 I want to follow up on some of Mr. Loeb sack's line of  
2616 questioning. While the president and the Republicans are

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2617 criticizing social media -- I think it's to whip up their base  
2618 -- there are real issues such as the shocking number of teens  
2619 that are reporting being bullied.

2620           Physical playground bullying is bad enough. But,  
2621 increasingly, this cruelty is moving online where one click of  
2622 a button sends hateful words and images that can be seen by  
2623 hundreds or even thousands of people at a time.

2624           People, kids, are being targeted for being who they are or  
2625 for being a certain race or a certain sexual orientation and so  
2626 on.

2627           We know it's pervasive -- it's a pervasive problem. The  
2628 First Lady has made combatting cyber bullying a national priority,  
2629 oddly enough. At the same time, adults are not giving kids a  
2630 great example to follow.

2631           Public figures including the president spew inflammatory  
2632 harmful words every day. These actions cannot be erased and may  
2633 follow their victims and families forever.

2634           For example, how does it feel to be in front of us for hours  
2635 at a time?

2636           Mr. Dorsey. I am enjoying the conversation.

2637           Mr. Cardenas. Yes. But do you get to go home? Do you get  
2638 to do what you choose to do once you leave this room?

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2639 Mr. Dorsey. Yes.

2640 Mr. Cardenas. Well, that's what's incredibly important for  
2641 us to think about when we think about bullying online because  
2642 it's inescapable, really, and that's really an issue that is new  
2643 to us as human beings and certainly with platforms like yours  
2644 it's made possible. It can take many forms.

2645 It can be hurtful. It's about words. It's about  
2646 appearances. It's about many, many things. So I think it's  
2647 really important that the public understands that something needs  
2648 to be done about it and what can be done is something that,  
2649 hopefully, we can come to terms with you over at Twitter and with  
2650 all the millions of people who use it.

2651 As very public examples, for example, celebrities such as  
2652 14-year-old Millie Bobby Brown, Kelly Marie Tran, Ariel Winter,  
2653 and Ruby Rose have stopped using Twitter or taken breaks from  
2654 Twitter because their intense -- the intensified bullying that  
2655 they experience on the platform have persisted. If Twitter  
2656 couldn't or wouldn't help these public figures, how does it deal  
2657 with all the kids who aren't famous? I want to know how you handle  
2658 bullying claims for American families who are not in the news.

2659  
2660 You have explained that Twitter investigates when it is --

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2661 when it gets a report of behavior such as that -- behavior that  
2662 crosses the line into abuse including behavior that harasses,  
2663 intimidates, or uses fear to silence other voices.

2664 How many reports of cyber bullying does Twitter receive each  
2665 month is my first question.

2666 Mr. Dorsey. We don't disclose that data but we can follow  
2667 up with you.

2668 Mr. Cardenas. Okay. Appreciate you reporting to the  
2669 committee on that answer. How about Periscope?

2670 Mr. Dorsey. The same.

2671 Mr. Cardenas. The same? Okay. Look forward to that  
2672 answer submitted to the committee.

2673 And how many of those reports are for accounts of people  
2674 age 18 or younger?

2675 Mr. Dorsey. In what regard? The -- Periscope or Twitter?

2676 Mr. Cardenas. Yes. Is it -- do you ever take into account  
2677 whether or not it's a report to somebody who's been attacked who  
2678 are 18 years or younger?

2679 Mr. Dorsey. We -- we'll have to follow up with you on that.

2680 We don't have the same sort of the demographic data that our  
2681 peers do because we are not a service of profiles but of -- but  
2682 of conversation.

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2683 Mr. Cardenas. That makes it even more critical for us to  
2684 understand that. What actions are taken in response to these  
2685 reports and how long does it take for Twitter to take such a  
2686 response?

2687 Mr. Dorsey. We rank according to the severity of the report  
2688 and, again, this is something that we need to improve to understand  
2689 the severity of each report and how that is ranked so we can move  
2690 much faster.

2691 Ultimately, we don't want the reporting burden to be on the  
2692 victim. We want to do it automatically.

2693 Mr. Cardenas. Okay. Thank you very much. I am out of  
2694 time.

2695 Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

2696 The Chairman. I thank the gentleman.

2697 And we now turn to the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Griffith,  
2698 for four minutes.

2699 Mr. Griffith. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I  
2700 appreciate you being here, Mr. Dorsey.

2701 I represent that portion of Virginia that's in the southwest  
2702 corner and borders a big chunk of southern West Virginia and so  
2703 I had some questions similar to Mr. McKinley's questions because  
2704 we are suffering from a huge opioid problem but drugs in general.

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2705           And so I know you're trying and you're working on it and  
2706 you're looking for things. But last year in an edition of  
2707 Scientific American, they talked about having artificial  
2708 intelligence scan Twitter for signs of opioid abuse, and it would  
2709 seem to me that on something that's an illegal conduct, if somebody  
2710 is selling drugs that's not just an inconvenience or trying to  
2711 judge whether it's truly, you know, something that's bad or --  
2712 it's illegal -- it would seem to me that you all ought to be able  
2713 to deploy an artificial intelligence platform that would knock  
2714 down anybody trying to sell illegal substances on your platform.

2715           Can you address that?

2716           Mr. Dorsey. Yes. We -- I mean, we have -- we have to  
2717 prioritize all of our models and we have been prioritizing --

2718           Mr. Griffith. Shouldn't illegal be at the very top of that  
2719 model?

2720           Mr. Dorsey. Absolutely. But we have been prioritizing a  
2721 lot of what we saw in 2016 and 2017 in terms of election  
2722 interference and our readiness for 2018. That does not say --

2723           Mr. Griffith. Here's what I got. I got people writing me  
2724 whose kids have died because they've been in treatment, they have  
2725 a relapse, and one of the easiest ways to get in there is to get  
2726 on social media and, you know, if scientists can use artificial

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2727 intelligence to track opioid abuse in this country, it would seem  
2728 to me you ought to be able to track illegal sales with artificial  
2729 intelligence. Now, wouldn't you agree with that? Yes or no.

2730 Mr. Dorsey. I agree with that. It's horrible and  
2731 definitely it's something we need to address as soon as possible.

2732 Mr. Griffith. I appreciate that very much.

2733 Now, look, I don't think there's a conspiracy. I think that  
2734 there's a lot of folks out there, though, that may not have that  
2735 many conservative friends who might be living in your neighborhood  
2736 or living in the area that you live in, and I looked at your  
2737 advisory council.

2738 There may be some right-leaning groups but I didn't see any  
2739 right groups in there that would -- you know, look, we are not  
2740 all crazy on the right. Get in there and find some groups that  
2741 can help out on your advisory council.

2742 Also, I would say to you, and I said this to Mr. Zuckerberg  
2743 when he was here, it seems to me that if you don't want the  
2744 government in there -- and I think it's better not to have the  
2745 government in there telling you all what to do as social media  
2746 -- that you all as a group ought to get together and come up with  
2747 something.

2748 1894 had this new-fangled thing. Electronic devices were

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2749 coming onto the scene and an engineer says, you know what -- maybe  
2750 we ought to test all this, and they got the insurance companies  
2751 and the electric manufacturers together and they funded United  
2752 Laboratories, and as an industry without government coming in  
2753 and saying, this is what you have to do, they came up with  
2754 standards.

2755           It would seem to me that the social media, particularly the  
2756 big actors like yourself, but others ought to come together,  
2757 figure out something that's a template that works for all to make  
2758 sure that we are not having political bias because I really do  
2759 believe you when you say that you all aren't trying to do it.

2760

2761           But it's happening anyway, and I think it's an accident.

2762           I am not -- I am not trying to assess blame. But I am saying  
2763 you have got to help us because I don't think it's good for the  
2764 internet or social media to have the government laying down rules  
2765 that may or may not make sense.

2766           But somebody's got to do something because we need to protect  
2767 privacy, as you have heard, and we need to make sure there's not  
2768 any political bias intentional or unintentional. Would you agree  
2769 to that?

2770           Mr. Dorsey. It's a great idea and that is why we want to

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2771 be a lot more open around these health indicators that we are  
2772 developing and we don't see this as a competition.

2773 Mr. Griffith. And last but not least, one of the questions  
2774 that's come up as I've been discussing this issue with a lot of  
2775 folks is if you -- if you do put the kibosh on somebody's post  
2776 or somebody's Twitter account, can you at least tell them about  
2777 it so that they have some idea so they can do the appeal? Because  
2778 if they don't know about it, they're not likely to appeal, are  
2779 they?

2780 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. We need a much more robust way of  
2781 communicating what happened and why and also a much more robust  
2782 appeals process.

2783 Mr. Griffith. Thank you very much. My time is up. I yield  
2784 back.

2785 The Chairman. I thank the gentleman.

2786 I turn now to the gentleman from California, Mr. Peters,  
2787 for four minutes.

2788 Mr. Peters. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr.  
2789 Dorsey, for being here.

2790 You know, I don't know if anyone else has mentioned the  
2791 breath-taking irony that Donald Trump is complaining about  
2792 Twitter.

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2793           It's hard for me to imagine he would have done nearly as  
2794 well as he did without your platform and he's a master of using  
2795 it. I think it has done some wonderful things for democracy.

2796           It's democratized democracy in many ways.

2797           We saw that here in the House when we live streamed the  
2798 protest over guns in 2016. It brought people into the chamber  
2799 in a way that I think none of us had imagined before. I use it  
2800 a lot just to stay connected back home in San Diego.

2801           I find out what's going on every day in the local government,  
2802 in the local activities. I follow my baseball team's promising  
2803 minor leagues through it and I think it's been a great platform.

2804           The problem with when anyone can be on your platform, though,  
2805 is that now everyone's a journalist and I just want to explore  
2806 in that context your discussion of the term fairness.

2807           Can you -- have you ever written down what you mean by  
2808 fairness? And what I am sort of getting at is, you know, you  
2809 have these allegations about facts versus false equivalency that  
2810 journalism has been dealing with I think more successfully  
2811 recently, trying to provide truth rather than balance.

2812           Is that something that goes into your calculation of fairness  
2813 and what kind of standards do you impose on content that's on  
2814 Twitter?

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2815 Mr. Dorsey. So we want to -- fairness to us means that we  
2816 are driving more impartial outcomes, which are more objective  
2817 driven, not basing anything on bias, and we do want to be able  
2818 to measure this and also make public what we find, and that's  
2819 why we kicked off this initiative to understand the health of  
2820 conversation and how it might trend.

2821 One of the -- one of the indicators that we are considering  
2822 is shared facts and that is the percentage of conversation that  
2823 shares the same facts.

2824 That is not an indication of truth or not, just what  
2825 percentage of people participating in a conversation are actually  
2826 sharing the same facts versus having different facts, and we think  
2827 a greater collection of shared facts leads to a healthier  
2828 conversation.

2829 So then if we understand the makeup of them currently, how  
2830 can we help drive more people towards sharing more of the facts  
2831 and if we can do that then we can see a lot more healthy  
2832 conversations. So that's our intent.

2833 But first, we are at the phase where we just need to measure  
2834 it against those four indicators I laid out earlier, and we can  
2835 send you more of our information and thinking about how we are  
2836 developing these.

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2837 Mr. Peters. I would love to hear that. One of the problems  
2838 with everyone having their own facts is it's very hard to have  
2839 conversations about difficult issues.

2840 One that I am concerned about is climate change. If everyone  
2841 has a different understanding of the facts it's hard to agree  
2842 on what to do about it.

2843 Mr. Sarbanes raised the concept of this hearing being a way  
2844 to work to refs. I don't know if you recall that reference.

2845 Is that something that we should be concerned about? Is  
2846 that something that strikes you as going to have an impact on  
2847 your business, the notion that we'll -- that the committee would  
2848 be working the refs with the majority?

2849 Mr. Dorsey. I honestly don't know what that means so --

2850 Mr. Peters. Okay. Good. So the idea is that we will --  
2851 that they're going to put so much pressure on you to avoid pressure  
2852 from us that you will change your behavior in a way that's not  
2853 -- that's not fair. Is that something that we should be concerned  
2854 about?

2855 Mr. Dorsey. Well, I mean, I think we -- we've articulated  
2856 what we think is important and what we are trying to drive and  
2857 I see the role of government as being a checkpoint to that and  
2858 also being a clarifier and asking questions of our path and, you

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2859 know, I do believe the system is working in that regard.

2860 So we -- you know, we are putting out what we believe is  
2861 critical for us to focus on and if there are disagreements en  
2862 masse in feedback we get, we will certainly change our path.

2863 Mr. Peters. Well, I appreciate your testimony today. My  
2864 time has expired and I thank the chairman.

2865 The Chairman. I thank the gentleman.

2866 The chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida, Mr.  
2867 Bilirakis, for four minutes.

2868 Mr. Bilirakis. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it.  
2869 Thank you very much, and thank you for your testimony, Mr. Dorsey.

2870 Mr. Dorsey, I've heard from my local Pasco County school  
2871 district -- that's located on the west coast of Florida -- that  
2872 is -- it has consistently responded to threats of school violence.

2873 I've heard from the superintendent, Kurt Browning, who's  
2874 doing an outstanding job, that it faced as many as 19 threats  
2875 in one week. Many of those threats have come from individual  
2876 tweets.

2877 News reports and studies show this is a widespread problem,  
2878 as you can imagine. What is your company's process for notifying  
2879 local law enforcement officials and school districts when these  
2880 threats emerge?

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2881 Mr. Dorsey. We do have outreach to local entities and local  
2882 law enforcement when we see anything impacting someone's physical  
2883 security. We can follow up with you on exactly what those  
2884 implementations are.

2885 Mr. Bilirakis. Well, how effective have they been? Can  
2886 you give me --

2887 Mr. Dorsey. I don't -- I don't -- I am not sure how to  
2888 determine the efficacy. But we can -- we can follow up with you  
2889 on that and share what we have.

2890 Mr. Bilirakis. Please do. Please do.

2891 And would you consider an internal process in which Twitter  
2892 can work directly with the school districts to address these  
2893 tweets quickly? Obviously, time is of the essence.

2894 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. You know, one of the things we are always  
2895 looking for is ways to quickly, especially where it impacts  
2896 physical security, ways to quickly alert us to things that we  
2897 might be able to help with in terms of the conversation around  
2898 it.

2899 So we are certainly open to it and open to an implementation  
2900 that we think we can scale.

2901 Mr. Bilirakis. Let me ask you a question. How did you  
2902 determine the -- and I know social media, Facebook too -- the

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2903 minimum age of use, 13, and are you considering raising that age?

2904 Mr. Dorsey. We, I don't believe, have considered raising  
2905 the age but we do determine it upon sign-up.

2906 Mr. Bilirakis. Okay. Thank you.

2907 The next question -- according to Twitter's website,  
2908 Twitter's Moments are defined as, quote, and I quote again,  
2909 "curated storage showing the very best of what's happening on  
2910 Twitter and customized to show you topics that are popular or  
2911 relevant so you can discover what is unfolding, again, customized  
2912 to show you topics and what's relevant so you can, again, what  
2913 is unfolding on Twitter in an instant," and that's an end quote.

2914 In my experience, Twitter Moments more often features a  
2915 specific point of view or political narrative, and the question  
2916 is how are these Moments -- again, quote, "Moments," compiled  
2917 and prioritized?

2918 You said earlier that Moments are selected by employees  
2919 publishing content. What are the internal guidelines the company  
2920 has set to determine what makes a Moment?

2921 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. So we, first and foremost, take a  
2922 data-driven approach to how we arrange these Moments and, again,  
2923 these are collections of tweets that we look at, based on any  
2924 particular topic or event, and we bring them into a collection,

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2925 and we use a data-driven approach meaning that we are looking  
2926 for the amount of conversation, first and foremost, that's  
2927 happening around a particular event, and then as we rank that,  
2928 then we go into impartiality to make sure that we are looking  
2929 for opportunities to show as many perspectives as possible.

2930 So a variety of perspectives and a high score on a variety  
2931 of perspectives is beneficial to the people reading because they  
2932 can see every side of a particular issue or a particular event.

2933 Mr. Bilirakis. Okay. Very good. I thank you and look  
2934 forward to getting some information on this particular --

2935 Mr. Dorsey. Thank you.

2936 Mr. Bilirakis. -- following up and we'd like to have you  
2937 back, in my opinion, even though I am not the chairman, to see  
2938 the progress that you have made with regard to these issues.

2939 Thank you, and I yield back.

2940 Mr. Dorsey. Thank you.

2941 The Chairman. I thank the gentleman.

2942 The chair recognizes the gentlelady from Michigan, Mrs.  
2943 Dingell, for four minutes.

2944 Mrs. Dingell. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr.  
2945 Dorsey.

2946 You're actually one of my husband's heroes. I am married

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2947 to what we call -- affectionately call around here the Dean of  
2948 Twitter who, quite frankly, at 92 is better on Twitter than  
2949 probably everybody in this room, which means I know the power  
2950 of this platform and I think it's a very important tool.

2951 But to those who have been doing conspiracy theories and  
2952 politicizing this, it is not only Meghan McCain -- that I, myself,  
2953 have had some of those same threats and those same caricatures  
2954 and, quite frankly, I was blissfully ignorant until law  
2955 enforcement brought it to my attention.

2956 So I would -- I do think that the threats that are happening  
2957 on Twitter do need to be better understood and more quickly acted  
2958 upon.

2959 But I would rather ask some questions right now because  
2960 you're educating all of us and we all need to understand social  
2961 media better, period, and its tool in the background.

2962 So I would like to ask some questions about privacy and the  
2963 use of machine learning and artificial intelligence on the  
2964 platform.

2965 You have spoken about how you are trying to deploy machine  
2966 learning to combat the disinformation, the harassment, the abuse,  
2967 and I want to build on what some of my other colleagues have said  
2968 about the black box nature of these algorithms and the lack of

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2969 what they call accountability but how we improve it.

2970           So building on what actually my colleague, Representative  
2971 Harper, was saying, what type of data sets do you use to train  
2972 AI and how often do you retrain them?

2973           Mr. Dorsey. That's a great question. We try to use data  
2974 sets that will be predictive of what we would expect to see on  
2975 the service and as we train these models we are certainly using  
2976 previous experiences and outputs that we've seen in natural uses  
2977 of how people use the system and then also trying to test some  
2978 edge cases as well.

2979           But, again, all these tests are great and help us understand  
2980 what to expect but, ultimately, they're not really put to test  
2981 until they're released on production and we actually see how  
2982 people use it and how it's affecting usage and also what might  
2983 be unexpected, which I talked about earlier.

2984           So that is in -- that's training. There are -- AI is not  
2985 a new field but the application of AI at scale is rather new,  
2986 especially to us and our company.

2987           So there are best practices being developed that we are  
2988 learning as quickly as possible from and, more importantly, trying  
2989 to measure those outcomes in terms of bias and impartiality.

2990           Mrs. Dingell. So as we build on that, do your engineers

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2991 have an ability to see and understand why an algorithm made certain  
2992 decisions?

2993 Mr. Dorsey. That is a great question because that goes into  
2994 another field of research in AI which is called explainability,  
2995 which is encouraging engineers to write a function that enables  
2996 the algorithm to describe how it made the decision and why it  
2997 made the decision and I think that is a critical question to ask  
2998 and one to focus on because we are offloading more and more of  
2999 our decisions to these technologies, whether they be companies  
3000 like ours who are offloading our enforcement actions to algorithms  
3001 or ranking actions to algorithms or even personally.

3002 I am wearing an Apple watch right now and it tells me when  
3003 to stand. I've offloaded a decision to it, and if it can't explain  
3004 the context to why it made that decision or why it's taking that  
3005 action, it becomes quite scary.

3006 So I do believe that is a valid -- a valid form. It is  
3007 extremely early in terms of research -- this concept of  
3008 explainability -- but I think it will be one that bears the  
3009 greatest fruit in terms of trust.

3010 Mrs. Dingell. For the record because I am going to be out  
3011 of time. You have talked about how these algorithms have missed  
3012 things. It's made mistakes. What is an acceptable error rate?

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3013 You can do that for the record later, but I just --

3014 Mr. Dorsey. I will come back -- we'll come back.

3015 The Chairman. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from  
3016 Ohio, Mr. Johnson, for four minutes.

3017 Mr. Johnson. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Dorsey, thank  
3018 you for being here today. Is it -- is it safe to say that an  
3019 algorithm is essentially a decision tree that once it's turned  
3020 into software it operates on a dataset as input and it produces  
3021 a desired action or result? Is that -- would that be a good  
3022 layman's term of what an algorithm is?

3023 Mr. Dorsey. For a general algorithm, yes. But it gets a  
3024 lot more complicated.

3025 Mr. Johnson. I know it gets a lot more complicated than  
3026 that and I am going to get into the complication. You know,  
3027 there's -- I am a software engineer by trade and I've written  
3028 thousands and thousands of algorithms.

3029 There's as much art that goes into writing an algorithm as  
3030 there is science. Would you agree with that?

3031 Mr. Dorsey. I agree with that.

3032 Mr. Johnson. So and, essentially, there's a part of the  
3033 heart of the algorithm writer that's writing that algorithm,  
3034 correct?

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3035 Mr. Dorsey. In --

3036 Mr. Johnson. I mean, if you have got a painter -- if you  
3037 got -- if you put 10 painters in 10 different rooms and say, paint  
3038 me a picture of a tree, you're going to get Charlie Brown's  
3039 Christmas tree in one room.

3040 You're going to get a tree with an oak tree and a swing and  
3041 grass underneath it. You're going to get 10 different pictures  
3042 of a tree. If you ask 10 software engineers to develop you an  
3043 algorithm you're going to get 10 different solutions to solve  
3044 that problem, right?

3045 Mr. Dorsey. Which is why testing is so important because  
3046 we are looking for other algorithms.

3047 Mr. Johnson. Which is why testing is so important. What  
3048 kind of testing do you guys do with your algorithms to make sure  
3049 that that innate bias that's inevitable because you -- it's  
3050 already been admitted that Twitter has got bias in your algorithms  
3051 because you have acknowledged that and you have tried to correct  
3052 it.

3053 So how do you go about weeding out that innate bias? Do  
3054 you do any peer reviews of your algorithms before you -- before  
3055 you send them to production?

3056 Mr. Dorsey. We do do those internally, yes.

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3057 Mr. Johnson. Well, can't you -- can't you modify your  
3058 algorithms, especially in this age of artificial intelligence  
3059 to be more intelligent in identifying and alerting on specific  
3060 things?

3061 I mean, we got -- in the automotive industry today we've  
3062 got artificial intelligence in automobiles that doesn't just tell  
3063 you that there's in front of you. It actually puts the brakes  
3064 on. It takes some action and it's instantaneous because it saves  
3065 lives.

3066 Is it unreasonable to think that Twitter could not modify  
3067 its algorithms to hit on illegal drug sales, on violent  
3068 terminology, and those kinds of things and make faster alerts  
3069 to stop some of this?

3070 Mr. Dorsey. Not unreasonable at all. It's just a matter  
3071 of work and doing the work and that is our focus.

3072 Mr. Johnson. Okay. Well, I would submit to you that you  
3073 need to do that work and you need to get to it pretty quick.

3074 Let me ask you another quick question. The trending topics  
3075 list is a -- is an important issue and I want to understand that  
3076 one. Can you -- can you tell me how a topic is determined to  
3077 be trending? Give me some specific -- what's it based on?

3078 Mr. Dorsey. Well, so in a tweet when you use a particular

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3079 key word or hashtag, when the system notices that those are used  
3080 en masse in aggregate, it recognizes that there's a velocity shift  
3081 in the number of times people are tweeting about a particular  
3082 hashtag or trend and it identifies those and then puts them on  
3083 that trending topic list.

3084 Now, there is a default setting where we personalize those  
3085 trending topics for you and that is the default. So when you  
3086 first come on to Twitter, trending topics are personalized to  
3087 you and it's personalized based on the accounts you follow and  
3088 how you engage with tweets and what not.

3089 Basically, you know, we could show you all the trending  
3090 topics happening in the world but not all of them are going to  
3091 be relevant to you. We take the ones that are relevant to you  
3092 and rank them accordingly.

3093 Mr. Johnson. So it's trending based on what's relevant to  
3094 you, essentially?

3095 Mr. Dorsey. Correct.

3096 Mr. Johnson. Okay. My time is up. But let me just say  
3097 this, and I said this to Mr. Zuckerberg. You know, in the absence  
3098 of massive federal regulations telling you guys how to do your  
3099 business, the responsibility bar goes really, really high.

3100 And I think, coming back to what Mr. Griffith says, I think

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3101 you guys need to look at an outside entity of some sort to help  
3102 you bounce off ideas of how to address this stuff before legal  
3103 or market forces drive you to a place that you're not going to  
3104 want to go.

3105 The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired.

3106 Mr. Johnson. I yield back.

3107 The Chairman. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from  
3108 New York, Mr. Tonko, for four minutes.

3109 Mr. Tonko. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Dorsey,  
3110 for all the time you have given the committee.

3111 I want to echo my dismay that our Republican colleagues have  
3112 chosen to hold this hearing to rile up their base and give credence  
3113 to unsupported conspiracies when there are real issues here that  
3114 run to the heart of our civic life that deserve our immediate  
3115 attention.

3116 It is unfortunate and a missed opportunity on behalf of our  
3117 majority.

3118 Mr. Dorsey, I know that Twitter has said it is taking steps  
3119 to help make political advertising more transparent on the  
3120 platform and is now working to do something similar with issue  
3121 ads.

3122 Unfortunately, looking at Twitter today, I am concerned that

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3123 even for political ads you haven't made anything clear necessarily  
3124 to consumers. On some platforms, and Facebook for an example,  
3125 if a user visits a political or politician's website, that user  
3126 can immediately see all the advertisement that she or he has  
3127 purchased on the platform.

3128 On Twitter, I have to find a separate resource -- the ads  
3129 transparency center -- and then search for the politician to see  
3130 what promotion she or he purchased in the past. It is, indeed,  
3131 difficult to find and seems ill advised, particularly when your  
3132 competitors are doing it differently and perhaps better.

3133 So did Twitter do any research regarding how best to make  
3134 election advertising information available to its consumers?

3135 Mr. Dorsey. We did do some research. But this is not a  
3136 stopping point for us. So we want to continue to make ad  
3137 transparency something that is meeting our customers where they  
3138 are so that it is relevant so it's easy to get to.

3139 We did some things a little bit differently. We have  
3140 launched the issue ad feature of the ad transparency as well.

3141 But we also enabled anyone, even without a Twitter account, to  
3142 search Twitter ads to see who is behind them and also the targeting  
3143 criteria that are used.

3144 Mr. Tonko. Thank you. And have you kept any statistics

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3145 that you can share with this committee today about how often  
3146 average consumers even searched the ads transparency center?

3147 Mr. Dorsey. We do keep statistics and track usage of all  
3148 of our products. We can certainly follow up with your office  
3149 to give you some relevant information.

3150 Mr. Tonko. Thank you. And I know that you said this is  
3151 not a stopping point -- that you're still exploring -- but why  
3152 is it that it appears that you're making it harder for Americans  
3153 to see who's trying to influence them?

3154 Mr. Dorsey. That's not our intention and, you know, we do  
3155 know we need to make -- do a lot more work to meet people where  
3156 they are, and in the interface there's just some design choices  
3157 that we need to make in order to do this the right way.

3158 Mr. Tonko. What's more, it seems that political advertising  
3159 information that Twitter makes available only shows  
3160 advertisements served in the past seven days. Is that correct?

3161 Mr. Dorsey. I don't -- I am not aware right now of the  
3162 constraints on it. But we'll follow up with you.

3163 Mr. Tonko. Okay. But if that is correct, that seems vastly  
3164 insufficient, given that political campaigns in the U.S. last  
3165 months, if not years.

3166 So, Mr. Dorsey, why doesn't your platform reflect that

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3167 insight and disclose political advertising beyond seven days if  
3168 that, indeed, is the time frame?

3169 Mr. Dorsey. We'll look into that.

3170 Mr. Tonko. Okay. I appreciate that immensely, and I thank  
3171 you.

3172 And I yield back, Mr. Chair, the balance of my time.

3173 The Chairman. I thank the gentleman.

3174 We now go to the gentleman from Missouri, Mr. Long, for four  
3175 minutes.

3176 Mr. Long. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr.  
3177 Dorsey, for being here.

3178 I think it's pretty easy to understand why you have been  
3179 as successful as you have because your mannerisms today, your  
3180 decorum -- a lot of people come into these hearings and they  
3181 practice and they coach them and they tell them how to act. It's  
3182 obvious that no one did that for you.

3183 You are who you are and that shows today and I think that  
3184 that has a lot to do with how successful you have been. So thank  
3185 you for your time and being here today.

3186 Mr. Dorsey. Thank you.

3187 Mr. Long. I do have a couple of questions. Mr. Bilirakis  
3188 asked you about Moments. I am not sure exactly what Moments are

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3189 but when my staff got a hold of me couple days ago they said,  
3190 well, what do you want to ask Mr. Dorsey -- where do you want  
3191 to take this -- what direction -- do a little research.

3192 And I just -- you know, off the top of my head I said, well,  
3193 let me send you some stuff so I started shooting them emails,  
3194 and these are emails that I received -- they're called highlights,  
3195 as you're familiar with -- daily highlights to my personal Twitter  
3196 account about the most interesting content from Twitter that is  
3197 tailored just for me.

3198 And when we are talking about impartiality and, you know,  
3199 somebody said the Republicans are all full of conspiracy theories  
3200 over here, I just want you to -- you know, you're a thoughtful  
3201 guy. I just want you to take into consideration what I am going  
3202 to say and do with it what you want to.

3203 But if you're saying hey, we are impartial -- we really are  
3204 -- this, that and the other, out of the -- I pulled -- I just  
3205 started firing off emails to my lege director and I sent him eight  
3206 -- excuse me, 14 emails of highlights that were sent to me just  
3207 in the last few days and I guess, I don't know, it might have  
3208 been over 14 days -- I don't know how often you send them.

3209 But there's six highlighted tweets per email. So that's  
3210 a total of 84 recent examples that you all picked out and said

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3211 hey, this conservative congressman from Missouri -- and thank  
3212 goodness you're a Cardinal fan -- but and you being from Missouri  
3213 -- but this conservative congressman that we found out what this  
3214 guy wants to read and here it is.

3215 Twelve of them of the 84 were from Glenn Thrush, reporter  
3216 for the New York Times; Maggie Haberman -- you sent me nine from  
3217 her -- White House correspondent for the New York Times, political  
3218 analyst for CNN; Chris Cillizza, political commentator for CNN;  
3219 David Frum, senior editor at The Atlantic and MSNBC contributor;  
3220 Nicole Wallace, current anchor of Deadline White House and chief  
3221 political analyst for MSNBC and NBC News; Sam Stein, former  
3222 political editor of the Huffington Post, politics editor at the  
3223 Daily Beast and MSNBC contributor; Rep. Eric Swalwell, Democratic  
3224 congressman from California's 15th District; Robert Costa,  
3225 national political reporter for the Washington Post, a political  
3226 analyst for NBC News and MSNBC; Kaitlan Collins, White House  
3227 correspondent for CNN; Michael Schmidt, New York Times  
3228 correspondent and contributor to MSNBC and NBC; Tommy Vietor,  
3229 former spokesman for President Obama; David Corn, MSNBC analyst  
3230 and author of the "Russian Roulette" book; Kasie Hunt, NBC News  
3231 correspondent, host of MSNBC Show; Richard Painter, commentator  
3232 on MSNBC and CNN, outspoken critic of Trump; David Axelrod,

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3233 commentator for CNN, former chief strategist for Obama's  
3234 campaign, senior advisor to Obama.

3235 I did not cherry pick these. Here's a Republican -- a former  
3236 Republican. I am not sure what he is now. But you did send me  
3237 one from Bill Kristol, founder and editor of the "At Large Weekly"  
3238 and a vocal supporter and a never Trumper guy, and you did send  
3239 me another one from Fox News -- I will put that in there -- Brit  
3240 Hume, senior political analyst for Fox News channel.

3241 I want to submit these for the record so you can peruse them  
3242 at your leisure. That's the only two I remember being Republican  
3243 -- Kristol -- and out of 84 they were handpicked, tailored for  
3244 me because they know what I want to read. But Glenn Thrush, Chris  
3245 Cillizza -- it just goes on and on.

3246 I have, I guess, 14 pages of them here, and they're all pretty  
3247 much Trump bashing. They're all pretty much Trump bashing. I  
3248 mean, if you just go right down the line, one after another.

3249 So just, if you will, take that into consideration and,  
3250 again, I do -- and I think that there was a fake news tweet sent  
3251 out yesterday by a guy that was sitting here earlier and he's  
3252 not here anymore.

3253 John Gizzi -- reporter John Gizzi sent out a fake news tweet  
3254 yesterday. He said he was headed to the Nationals' park -- that

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3255 he was going to watch them beat the Cardinals. That was fake  
3256 news.

3257 [Laughter.]

3258 I yield back.

3259 Mr. Dorsey. Thank you. It doesn't sound like we served  
3260 you well in matching your interests.

3261 Mr. Duncan. [Presiding.] The gentleman's time has  
3262 expired.

3263 The chair will recognize Ms. Schakowsky.

3264 Ms. Schakowsky. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3265 So while you have been sitting here all day -- we appreciate  
3266 that -- according to the Wall Street Journal, the Justice  
3267 Department to examine whether social media giants are, quote,  
3268 "intentionally stifling," some viewpoints, and it quotes the  
3269 president.

3270 It says that in an interview Wednesday morning with the Daily  
3271 Caller, Mr. Trump accused social media companies of interfering  
3272 in elections in favor of Democrats -- quote, "The truth is they  
3273 were all on Hillary Clinton's side," he said.

3274 Would you agree with that characterization by the -- by the  
3275 president?

3276 Mr. Dorsey. No.

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3277 Ms. Schakowsky. The other thing it says in this article  
3278 is that they expressed -- referring to the -- I guess it's in  
3279 the Senate -- they expressed contrition for allowing their  
3280 platform to be abused in the past while pledging to make --  
3281 protecting the system from -- the system during the 2018 mid-term  
3282 elections a priority.

3283 First of all, I just want to say about contrition, we heard  
3284 from Facebook's CEO, Mr. Zuckerberg, one example after another  
3285 after another through the years -- you haven't been there that  
3286 long, Twitter -- of contrition. We are sorry, we are sorry, we  
3287 are sorry.

3288 But even today, if I had listed well, we made a mistake --  
3289 we are going to do better, et cetera.

3290 So, first let me ask you, what are you going to do to make  
3291 sure that the election is not in some way influenced by foreign  
3292 governments in an inappropriate way?

3293 Mr. Dorsey. Well, this is -- this is our number-one priority  
3294 in our information quality efforts --

3295 Ms. Schakowsky. I hear that.

3296 Mr. Dorsey. -- and our broader health and we have benefited  
3297 from learning from recent elections like the Mexican election  
3298 and were able to test and refine a bunch of that work accordingly.

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3299           So we are doing a few things. First, we are opening portals  
3300 that allow partners and journalists to report anything suspicious  
3301 that they see so that we can take much faster action.

3302           Second, we are utilizing more technology to identify where  
3303 people are trying to artificially amplify information to steer  
3304 or detract the conversation.

3305           Third, we have a much stronger partnership with law  
3306 enforcement and federal law enforcement to make sure that we are  
3307 getting a regular cadence of meetings that we are seeing more  
3308 of the trends going on and that we can understand intent behind  
3309 these accounts and activities so we can act much faster as well.

3310           Ms. Schakowsky. Well, I appreciate that because that's  
3311 where the emphasis ought to be. I have to tell you, the president  
3312 and the Republicans have concocted this idea of a supposed  
3313 anti-conservative bias to, it seems to me, distract from the fact  
3314 that the -- that their majority has absolutely done nothing to  
3315 prevent foreign governments from using social media platforms  
3316 to spread misinformation, and if we don't do that then I think  
3317 our democracy itself is actually at stake.

3318           But also, in terms of your motives, Mr. Dorsey, the majority  
3319 of Twitter's revenue comes from selling advertising on the  
3320 platform, right?

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3321 Mr. Dorsey. Correct.

3322 Ms. Schakowsky. And Twitter is a for-profit  
3323 publicly-traded company. Is that right?

3324 Mr. Dorsey. Correct.

3325 Ms. Schakowsky. And generally speaking, businesses,  
3326 political campaigns, and other advertisers choose to advertise  
3327 on Twitter because Twitter promises to deliver targeted  
3328 highly-engaged audience. Is that agree -- is that what you'd  
3329 say?

3330 Mr. Dorsey. Correct.

3331 Ms. Schakowsky. So you actually said that you are  
3332 incentivized -- it says Twitter is incentivized to keep all voices  
3333 on the platform. Is that correct?

3334 Mr. Dorsey. No. That is where we need to make sure that  
3335 we are questioning our own senses but also we understand that  
3336 making health our top and singular priority means that we are  
3337 going to be removing accounts and we have done so.

3338 Ms. Schakowsky. Okay. I am quoting, actually -- that you  
3339 said from a business perspective Twitter is incentivized to keep  
3340 all voices on the platform.

3341 Mr. Dorsey. Oh. All perspectives. But I thought you  
3342 meant more the accounts. But we do want to make sure that we

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3343 are -- you know, we believe we are used as a public square for  
3344 people and that all perspectives should be represented.

3345 Ms. Schakowsky. Thank you, and thank you for being here.

3346 Mr. Dorsey. Thank you.

3347 Mr. Duncan. The gentlelady's time has expired. The chair  
3348 will recognize the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. Bucshon.

3349 Mr. Bucshon. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Dorsey, for being  
3350 here.

3351 I just want to say I don't think -- I don't see this as  
3352 particularly partisan. The hearing, I think, is completely  
3353 appropriate and relevant to the American people across political  
3354 ideology.

3355 I would respectfully disagree with my Democrat colleagues  
3356 and some of the comments they've made and I would just like to  
3357 say this.

3358 Ironically, in my view, they're the ones most likely to want  
3359 heavy-handed government intervention into your industry and I  
3360 would argue that people like me, Republicans, are trying to help  
3361 you avoid it. So take that for what it's worth.

3362 You know, you have implied and you have said that Twitter  
3363 is taking all these different actions to improve all the things  
3364 that you're doing as it relates to algorithms and other things.

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3366

What's your time line? And I know you have said that this is an ongoing process, right. You're never going to -- you're not going to get a checkered flag, right. But what's your time line for getting some of this really done?

3367

3368

3369

3370

Mr. Dorsey. We want to move as fast as possible, and I know that's a frustrating answer because it's really hard to predict these outcomes and how long they may take.

3371

3372

3373

But it is our singular objective as a company in terms of improving the -- increasing the health of the public square that we are hosting.

3374

3375

3376

Mr. Bucshon. Yes. Thank you.

3377

So how do -- is there any way that users and third parties can verify whether or not their political standards or judgments are embedded accidentally into Twitter's algorithms?

3378

3379

3380

I mean, I guess I am asking is are your algorithms publicly available for independent coders to assess whether there is bias, whether it's intended or unintended?

3381

3382

3383

Mr. Dorsey. Not today. But that is a -- that is an area we are looking at and we'd love to be more open as a company including our algorithms and how they work.

3384

3385

3386

We don't yet know the best way to do that. We also have

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3387 to consider in some cases when we are more clear about how our  
3388 algorithms work it allows for gaming of the system, so people  
3389 taking advantage of it.

3390 Mr. Bucshon. Yes.

3391 Mr. Dorsey. So we need to be cognizant of that, and it's  
3392 not a blocker by any means.

3393 Mr. Bucshon. Oh, I understand.

3394 Mr. Dorsey. We'd love for it to be open. But that's the  
3395 big -- that's a big understanding that we need to -- we need to  
3396 understand how to correct.

3397 Mr. Bucshon. Yes, I totally get that. I could see where  
3398 if the algorithms were there, then smart people are going to find  
3399 ways to subvert that, right. And there's some -- probably some  
3400 proprietariness there that you may have a competitor in the future  
3401 named something else and you don't want your processes out there.  
3402 I totally respect that.

3403 Mr. Dorsey. Although this is an area we don't want to  
3404 compete. We do not want to compete on health. We want to share  
3405 whatever we find.

3406 Mr. Bucshon. Okay. And I think many people have said, you  
3407 know, all of us, whether we know it or not, have some inherent  
3408 biases based on where we grew up, what our background is, what

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3409 our life experiences are.

3410 So I am kind of -- I am really interested in how you recruit,  
3411 you know, to your company, because I think -- I mean, obviously,  
3412 the tech industry has had some criticism about its level of  
3413 diversity.

3414 But I think it would be important to kind of get your feel  
3415 for if you're going to have -- if you're going to avoid group  
3416 think and you're creating algorithms, how do you -- how do you  
3417 recruit and -- I mean, you're not going to ask somebody, hey,  
3418 are you pro-Trump or against Trump.

3419 I get that, right. But you want to have -- I would argue  
3420 you want to have people from everywhere, different races, men,  
3421 women, different political view, because our -- my impression  
3422 is is, like, diversity is, in some respects, in certain industries  
3423 fine as long as it's not political diversity.

3424 So how do you -- can you give me a sense of how you kind  
3425 of build the team?

3426 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. This is an active conversation within  
3427 the company right now. We recognize that we need to decentralize  
3428 our workforce out of San Francisco. Not everyone wants to be  
3429 in San Francisco. Not everyone wants to work in San Francisco.  
3430 Not everyone can afford to even come close to living in San

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3431 Francisco and it's not fair.

3432           So we are considering ways of how we hire more broadly across  
3433 every geography across this country and also around the world  
3434 and being a lot more flexible. It's finally the case that  
3435 technology is enabling more of that and we are really excited  
3436 about this and I am personally excited to not consider San  
3437 Francisco to be a headquarters but to be a more distributed  
3438 company.

3439           Mr. Bucshon. Yes. I just want to say I think it's very  
3440 important to make sure that companies like yours do get a variety  
3441 of perspectives within your employee base.

3442           Thank you.

3443           Mr. Dorsey. I agree.

3444           Mr. Bucshon. Thanks for being here.

3445           Mr. Dorsey. Thank you.

3446           Mr. Duncan. The chair will recognize the gentleman from  
3447 California, Mr. Ruiz, for four minutes.

3448           Mr. Ruiz. Mr. Dorsey, you have had a long day. You're in  
3449 the home stretch.

3450           So thank you for being with us today. I am glad my colleagues  
3451 on this side of the aisle have been focussing on the issues that  
3452 are very important to our democracy and how we combat foreign

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3453 influences and bots and harassment and other challenges on your  
3454 platform.

3455 I would like to take a step back and look more precisely  
3456 at the makeup of Twitter's users and I am not sure we or even  
3457 possibly you have a true understanding of who is really using  
3458 your services and your website.

3459 So as you have said previously, the number of followers an  
3460 account has is critically important, both in terms of the  
3461 prominence of an account but also the ranking of algorithms that  
3462 push content to users.

3463 So when tens of thousands of new accounts created every day  
3464 both real and fake and by humans and bots alike, I am concerned  
3465 about the accuracy of those numbers we are using here today and  
3466 the implications those numbers have.

3467 So you have said that 5 percent of your accounts are false  
3468 or spam accounts. Is that correct?

3469 Mr. Dorsey. Correct.

3470 Mr. Ruiz. Okay. And is that -- how do you measure that?  
3471 Is that at any one time or is that over the course of any one  
3472 year? How did you come to the conclusion of 5 percent?

3473 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. We have various methods of  
3474 identification, most of them automations and machine learning

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3475 algorithms to identify these in real time, looking at the  
3476 behaviors of those accounts and --

3477 Mr. Ruiz. So that's how you identify which ones are false.

3478 But how did you come up with the 5 percent estimate of total  
3479 users are fake?

3480 Mr. Dorsey. Well, it's 5 percent, we believe, are taking  
3481 on spammy like behaviors, which would indicate an automation or  
3482 some sort of coordination to amplify information beyond their  
3483 earned reach.

3484 So we are looking at behaviors and that number --

3485 Mr. Ruiz. So you just take that number versus the total  
3486 number of users?

3487 Mr. Dorsey. The total -- the total active, and that number  
3488 has remained fairly consistent over time.

3489 Mr. Ruiz. Okay. In 2015, you reported that you had 302  
3490 million monthly active users on your platform. In 2016, it was  
3491 317 million monthly active users. In 2017, 330 million, and in  
3492 2018 you said 335 million monthly active users.

3493 How do you define monthly active users?

3494 Mr. Dorsey. It's someone who engages with the service  
3495 within the month.

3496 Mr. Ruiz. So is that somebody who tweets or somebody who

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3497 retweets or somebody who just logs in?

3498 Mr. Dorsey. Someone who just logs in.

3499 Mr. Ruiz. Okay. And is it 5 percent of those yearly numbers  
3500 that you believe to be spam of the -- somebody who just simply  
3501 logs in?

3502 Mr. Dorsey. Yes, who are taking on spam like behaviors or  
3503 spam like threats.

3504 Mr. Ruiz. And has the 5 percent been consistent over the  
3505 years?

3506 Mr. Dorsey. It has been consistent.

3507 Mr. Ruiz. Okay. So we have heard reports of hundreds of  
3508 Twitter accounts run by just one person. It's my understanding  
3509 that each of those accounts are counted as separate monthly active  
3510 users. Is that correct?

3511 Mr. Dorsey. Correct.

3512 Mr. Ruiz. Okay. Good. So my concern with these questions  
3513 is that the number of followers an account has, which is,  
3514 obviously, comprised of the subset of those 335 million Twitter  
3515 users, is an incredibly important metric to your site and one  
3516 you even said this morning in front of the Senate presented too  
3517 much of an incentive for account holders.

3518 Based on what we've heard, though, it appears that the number

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3519 of followers may not be an accurate representation of how many  
3520 real people follow any given account.

3521 For example, last year Twitter added, roughly, 13 million  
3522 users but early today you said you are flagging or removing 8  
3523 to 10 million per week.

3524 How can we be confident the 5 percent fraudulent account  
3525 number you are citing is accurate?

3526 Mr. Dorsey. Well, we -- we are constantly updating our  
3527 numbers and our understanding of our system and getting better  
3528 and better at that. We do see our work to mitigate --

3529 Mr. Ruiz. Before we end the time, I am going to ask you  
3530 one question and you can submit the information, if you don't  
3531 mind, and that's basically in medicine or any screening utility  
3532 -- I am a doctor -- for any screening utility we use a specificity  
3533 and sensitivity and that just measures how well your methodology  
3534 works. And the higher specificity the lower false positive you  
3535 have. The higher sensitivity the lower false negatives that you  
3536 have.

3537 In this case, you can see the different arguments is how  
3538 many false positives versus how many false negatives. We are  
3539 concerned that you're going to have false negatives with the  
3540 Russian bots.

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3541           Some are concerned that your false positive you're taking  
3542 out people that legitimately should be on there.

3543           So if you can report to us what those specificity and  
3544 sensitivity of your mechanism in identifying bots, I would really  
3545 appreciate that. That will give us a sense of where your  
3546 strengths are and where your weaknesses are.

3547           Mr. Dorsey. Thank you.

3548           Mr. Duncan. Point's well-made and the gentleman's time has  
3549 expired.

3550           The chair will go to Mr. Flores from Texas.

3551           Mr. Flores. I thank you, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate, Mr.  
3552 Dorsey, you showing up to help us today.

3553           If you don't mind, I am going to run through a bunch of  
3554 questions it will take and ask Twitter to supplementally ask those  
3555 later -- or excuse me, answer those later, and then I have a  
3556 question or two at the close that I would like to try to get asked.

3557           Our local broadcasters provide a valuable service when it  
3558 comes to emergency broadcasting or broadcasting of different  
3559 events that happen. You heard Mr. Burgess earlier talk about  
3560 the TV station that was attacked this morning and the first notice  
3561 he got was on Twitter.

3562           So my question is this. Should Twitter be considered a

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3563 trusted advisor in the emergency alerting system and how do you  
3564 manage the intentional or unintentional spread of misinformation  
3565 or abuse by bad actors on this platform during times of emergency?

3566 And you can supplementally answer that, if you would.

3567 And then the next question is -- this has to do with free  
3568 speech and expression -- does Twitter proactively review its  
3569 content to determine whether a user has violated its rules or  
3570 is it only done once another user voices the concerns.

3571 And the next question is do you have a set of values that  
3572 Twitter follows when it makes decisions about flagged content  
3573 or is it done on a case by case basis and which individuals at  
3574 Twitter make judgement calls.

3575 The next one has to do with how do you -- this is a conceptual  
3576 question I would like you to try to answer, and that's how do  
3577 you balance filtering versus -- and moderating versus free speech?

3578  
3579 I mean, there's always this tenuous balance between those  
3580 two. So if you could, I would like to have you respond to that.

3581 Then we need some definition. This is an oversight hearing.  
3582 We are not trying to legislate. We are just trying to -- and  
3583 not trying to get into fights -- we are just trying to get --  
3584 to learn about this space.

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3585           And so I would like to have Twitter's definitions of  
3586 behavior, Twitter's definition of hateful conduct, Twitter's  
3587 definition of low quality tweets.

3588           I would like to -- an explanation of the abuse reports  
3589 process, and also you said you had signals for ranking and  
3590 filtering. I would like to know how that process works, if we  
3591 can.

3592           I would like to know more about the Trust and Safety Council,  
3593 how it works, and its membership -- some of that's publicly  
3594 available, some of it's not -- and then the Twitter definition  
3595 of suspicious activity.

3596           And here's the question I have in the last minute that I  
3597 have that I would like you to respond to. A lot of the social  
3598 media space has been through some tumultuous times over the past  
3599 18 to 24 months, and so my question is this.

3600           If we were to have a hearing a year from now, what would  
3601 be the three biggest changes that Twitter has made that you would  
3602 share with Congress?

3603           Mr. Dorsey. That's an excellent question. So I believe,  
3604 first and foremost, we see a lot of progress on increasing the  
3605 health of public conversation.

3606           Second, I believe that we have reduced a bunch of the burden

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3607 that a victim has to go through in order to report any content  
3608 that is against them or silencing their voice or causing them  
3609 to not want to participate in the public space in the first place.

3610 And then third, we have a deeper understanding of the  
3611 real-world effects off platform of our service both to the broader  
3612 public and also to the individual as well, and those are things  
3613 that I think we can and will make a lot of progress on, the latter  
3614 one being probably the hardest to determine. But I think we are  
3615 going to learn a lot within these 2018 elections.

3616 Mr. Flores. Okay. I thank you for your responses and I  
3617 know you have got team people back there that took good notes  
3618 on the other ones that I left for supplemental disclosure.

3619 Thank you. I yield back.

3620 Mr. Costello. [Presiding.] Yields back.

3621 The gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Rush, is recognized for  
3622 four minutes.

3623 Mr. Rush. Mr. Dorsey, I certainly want to thank you for  
3624 being here and for really enduring this marathon of questions.

3625 I want to go back to the beginning of this hearing where  
3626 Mr. Pallone discussed the need for an independent third party  
3627 institute to conduct a civil rights audit of Twitter and I am  
3628 not sure of your answer. It was kind of vague to me.

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3629           So I ask the question, are you willing to commit to or are  
3630 you saying that Twitter will consider Mr. Pallone's request?  
3631 Is that a commitment or is that just a consideration?

3632           Mr. Dorsey. Yes. We are -- we are willing to commit to  
3633 working with you and staff to understand how to do this best in  
3634 a way that is -- that is actually going to show what we can track  
3635 and the results.

3636           But I think that is a dialogue we need to have.

3637           Mr. Rush. Thank you.

3638           Chicago is experiencing an epidemic of violence particularly  
3639 as it relates to our young people and Facebook has already been  
3640 confirmed as an asset that is being used by some of these young  
3641 people to commit violence.

3642           And my question to you, are you aware of where Twitter was  
3643 used to organize or perpetuate any form of street violence  
3644 anywhere in the nation and, certainly, in Chicago?

3645           Mr. Dorsey. We do look at cases and reports where people  
3646 are utilizing Twitter and coordinating in terms of having  
3647 off-platform violence.

3648           We do have a violent extremist group policy where we do look  
3649 at off-platform information to make judgments.

3650           Mr. Rush. And is there an automatic process for the removal

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3651 of such posts?

3652 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. There is a reporting process. But,  
3653 again, it does require right now for removal of the post a report  
3654 of the violation.

3655 Mr. Rush. So are they removed, though?

3656 Mr. Dorsey. Sorry?

3657 Mr. Rush. Are they removed?

3658 Mr. Dorsey. How many have been removed? We --

3659 Mr. Rush. No. Have you removed any?

3660 Mr. Dorsey. Have we removed any? We do often remove  
3661 content that violates our terms of service. We have a series  
3662 of enforcement actions that ranges from a warning to temporary  
3663 suspension and removal of the offending tweet all the way to a  
3664 permanent suspension of the -- of the account.

3665 Mr. Rush. All right. In that regard, do you also have any  
3666 authoritative actions that you have taken to inform local police  
3667 departments of these kind of activities?

3668 Mr. Dorsey. We do -- we do have partnerships with local  
3669 enforcement and law enforcement agencies all over the world and  
3670 we do inform them as necessary.

3671 Mr. Rush. All right. Let me ask you one other final  
3672 question here. I want to switch. Your legal and policy chief

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3673 told Politico yesterday, and I quote, "There is not a blanket  
3674 exception for the president or anyone else when it comes to abusive  
3675 tweeting."

3676 Do you consider President Trump's tweets to be abusive or  
3677 harmful at all?

3678 Mr. Dorsey. We hold every account to the same standards  
3679 in the consistency of our enforcement. We do have a clause within  
3680 our terms of service that allows for public interest and  
3681 understanding of public interest per tweet and, you know, we  
3682 definitely weigh that as we consider enforcement.

3683 Mr. Rush. Mr. Chairman, my time is --

3684 Mr. Costello. Yes.

3685 Mr. Pallone. Mr. Chairman, I seek unanimous consent to  
3686 submit a statement for the record on behalf of our colleague,  
3687 Representative Anna Eshoo of California.

3688 Mr. Costello. Without objection.

3689 [The information follows:]

3690

3691 \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT 6\*\*\*\*\*

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3692 Mr. Costello. The gentlelady from Indiana, Mrs. Brooks, is  
3693 recognized for four minutes.

3694 Mrs. Brooks. Thank you, and thank you, Mr. Dorsey, for being  
3695 here today and for sitting through an entirely very long day of  
3696 a lot of questions.

3697 And I want to share with you and stay a little bit on the  
3698 public safety angle. In 2015, I was very pleased because we got  
3699 signed into law the Department of Homeland Security Social Media  
3700 Improvement Act bill and this group has been meeting, which I  
3701 am pleased that they organized and have been meeting.

3702 They've issued about three different reports and actually  
3703 one of the reports is focused on highlighting countering false  
3704 information and disasters and emergencies.

3705 Another one focuses on best practices of incorporating  
3706 social media into their exercises -- public safety exercise all  
3707 the time, and then how do they operationalize social media for  
3708 public safety.

3709 I would be curious whether or not you and your team, A, if  
3710 you even knew anything about this group and whether or not you  
3711 and your team might be willing to assist this group.

3712 While I recognize that you have contacts around the globe,  
3713 there actually is a group -- a public safety social media group

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3714 that's very focussed on this and I think we need to have better  
3715 interaction between the social media platforms and organizations  
3716 and the public safety community so they can figure this out.

3717 Is that something you might be willing to consider?

3718 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. I was not aware of it, honestly, but I  
3719 am sure my team is and we'll definitely consider.

3720 Mrs. Brooks. Thank you.

3721 I am curious, and I asked Mr. Zuckerberg this when he appeared  
3722 before us -- with respect to the terrorism groups and the extremist  
3723 groups that you monitor and that you take down -- and I have seen  
3724 reports that in a short period of time, July of 2017 to December  
3725 of 2017, you actually took down 274,460 Twitter accounts in a  
3726 six-month period relative to promoting terrorism, and so that's  
3727 a -- seems like a very large number of accounts and I am afraid  
3728 that people believe that it's not happening. We don't hear about  
3729 it as much.

3730 Can you -- and I understand that you have worked with Google,  
3731 YouTube, Facebook, and others to create a shared database of  
3732 prohibited videos and images. But we don't hear anything about  
3733 that either. Is this database still in use? Are you all still  
3734 working together and collaborating?

3735 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. We are still working together and this

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3736 is a very active collaboration and a lot of, you know, the work  
3737 we've been doing over years continues to bear a lot of fruit here.

3738 But we are happy to send to the committee more detailed  
3739 results. We do have this in our transparency report.

3740 Mrs. Brooks. And I was going to ask, the transparency report  
3741 -- and you have talked about that a few times -- it's not done  
3742 yet. Is that right?

3743 Mr. Dorsey. It's not finished yet for actions upon content  
3744 in accounts that have to do with our health aspects. It is for  
3745 terrorism accounts.

3746 Mrs. Brooks. It is finished there. All of these questions  
3747 that you have gotten, and there have been a lot of things, can  
3748 we expect that a lot of these things might be in that transparency  
3749 report that people have been asking you about?

3750 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. The first step is to figure out what is  
3751 most meaningful to put in there. So, really, designing the  
3752 document so that people can get meaningful insight in terms of  
3753 how we are doing and what we are seeing and what we are dealing  
3754 with, and then we need to aggregate all that data.

3755 So we are in the early phases of designing this document  
3756 and how we are thinking about it. But we'd like to move fast  
3757 on it because we do believe it will help earn trust.

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3758 Mrs. Brooks. Well, and certainly from a public safety  
3759 perspective you can't and shouldn't divulge everything that you  
3760 do relative to helping keep us safe.

3761 And while I appreciate that it is very important to have  
3762 an open dialogue and to have the -- as much information as possible  
3763 in the conversation in the public square.

3764 I, certainly, hope that your work with law enforcement --  
3765 we need to make sure the bad guys don't understand what you're  
3766 doing to help us.

3767 And so I thank you and look forward to your continued work  
3768 in this space.

3769 Mr. Dorsey. Thank you so much.

3770 Mrs. Brooks. Thank you.

3771 The Chairman. [Presiding.] The gentlelady's time has  
3772 expired.

3773 The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania,  
3774 Mr. Costello, for four minutes.

3775 Mr. Costello. Thank you.

3776 Mr. Dorsey, in your testimony you identified a handful of  
3777 behavioral signals but you noted Twitter uses thousands of  
3778 behavioral signals in your behavioral-based ranking models.

3779 Could you provide the committee with a complete accounting

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3780 of all of these signals?

3781 Mr. Dorsey. We -- a lot of those signals are changing  
3782 constantly. So even if we present one today it might change  
3783 within a week or within a month.

3784 The point is that it's not a thousand behavioral signals.  
3785 It's a thousand decision-making criteria and signals that the  
3786 algorithms use.

3787 And I don't mean exactly a thousand -- it could be hundreds,  
3788 it could be thousands -- they all vary -- to actually make  
3789 decisions.

3790 Mr. Costello. Would you consider providing a more expansive  
3791 list of signals beyond the small handful that you have provided,  
3792 specifically those that seem to endure and that don't change week  
3793 to week?

3794 Mr. Dorsey. We are looking at ways to open up how our  
3795 algorithms work and what criteria they use to make decisions.

3796 We don't have conclusions just yet and the reason why we are  
3797 pausing a little bit here and considering is because by giving  
3798 up certain criteria we may be enabling more gaming of the system  
3799 --

3800 Mr. Costello. Sure.

3801 Mr. Dorsey. -- taking advantage of the system so that

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3802 people can bypass our protections.

3803 Mr. Costello. You used the term a little earlier curators.  
3804 Is that a term -- is that a position within your company or did  
3805 you just kind of -- could you -- what's a curator at your company  
3806 do?

3807 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. We have a -- we have a product within  
3808 Twitter called Moments and what it is is if you go to the search  
3809 icon you can see a collection of tweets that are actually arranged  
3810 by humans, organized around a particular event or a topic. So  
3811 it might be a supporting game, for example.

3812 And we have curators who are looking for all the tweets that  
3813 would be relevant and one of the things that they want to ensure  
3814 is that we are seeing a bunch of different perspectives --

3815 Mr. Costello. Relevant based on my behavior and do I have  
3816 to manually do that or is that going to show up in my feed?

3817 Mr. Dorsey. It's a -- we do that work and then sometimes  
3818 you make it a Moment that is more personalized to you based on  
3819 your behavior. In some cases, all people get the same Moment.

3820 Mr. Costello. Would that be subject -- and, listen, the  
3821 bias issue -- but would that -- that would open up consideration  
3822 for there to be more bias in any way.

3823 Bias can mean a lot of different things. It doesn't even

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3824 have to be political. That's -- so your curators are making some  
3825 sort of subjective determination on what might be of interest  
3826 -- what might pop more -- what might get more retweets, comments,  
3827 et cetera?

3828 Mr. Dorsey. Well, they use a data-driven approach based  
3829 on the percentage of conversation that people are seeing. So  
3830 we are trying to reflect how much this is being talked about on  
3831 the network, first and foremost, and then checking it against  
3832 impartiality and also making sure that we are increasing the  
3833 variety of perspective.

3834 Mr. Costello. I appreciated your testimony -- your written  
3835 testimony. You said something in there that interests me and  
3836 that -- a lot of things -- but one was you have no incentive to  
3837 remove people from your -- in other words, you have no incentive  
3838 to remove conservatives from your platform because the more people  
3839 talking the better.

3840 But it strikes me that in -- when we are talking about hate  
3841 speech or personal insults or things that are just straight up  
3842 mean there's kind of -- there's an incentive not remove that stuff  
3843 if it's driving more participation.

3844 How do you reconcile that?

3845 Mr. Dorsey. It's an excellent question, and something that

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3846 we have balanced in terms of, number one, our singular objective  
3847 is to increase the health of this public square and this public  
3848 space, and we realize that in the short term that will mean  
3849 removing accounts.

3850 And we do believe that increasing the health of the public  
3851 conversation on Twitter is a growth vector for us but only in  
3852 the long term and we -- you know, over the -- over the past few  
3853 months we've taken a lot of actions to remove accounts en masse.

3854

3855 We reported this during our -- during our past earnings call  
3856 and, you know, the reaction was what it was. But we did that  
3857 because we believe that, over the long term, these are the right  
3858 moves so that we can continue to serve a healthy public square.

3859 The Chairman. The gentleman's time --

3860 Mr. Costello. Yes. Thank you. I yield back.

3861 The Chairman. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from  
3862 Oklahoma, Mr. Mullin, for four.

3863 Mr. Mullin. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Dorsey, thank  
3864 you so much for being here.

3865 I've got a question, and this isn't a gotcha question. It's  
3866 a point that -- to which I want to try to make because as my  
3867 colleague from Virginia, Mr. Griffith, said earlier, he doesn't

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3868 believe that you're doing it on purpose.

3869 It's just that the way things are working out the system  
3870 to which you guys use to figure out who's going to be censored  
3871 and who's not.

3872 So my question is would you consider yourself conservative?  
3873 Liberal? Socialist? How would you -- how would you consider  
3874 your political views?

3875 Mr. Dorsey. I try to focus on the issues so I don't --

3876 Mr. Mullin. Well, I know, but the issues are at hand and  
3877 that's what I am trying to ask.

3878 Mr. Dorsey. What issues in particular?

3879 Mr. Mullin. Well, okay. If you're not going to -- are you  
3880 a registered voter?

3881 Mr. Dorsey. I am a registered voter.

3882 Mr. Mullin. Republican? Democrat?

3883 Mr. Dorsey. Independent.

3884 Mr. Mullin. Independent. So as a business owner myself,  
3885 different departments that I have seem to take on the personality  
3886 of the ones that I have running it -- the people that I have running  
3887 a department or a business or an organization.

3888 When I stepped down as CEO of my company, the new CEO took  
3889 on a different personality and the employees followed. And we

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3890 are choosing one mind set over another in some way, regardless  
3891 if you're doing it on purpose or not.

3892 The way that it is being picked, the way it's being portrayed,  
3893 is somewhat obvious and let me just simply make my point here.

3894 2016 presidential campaign the Twitter -- Twitter was  
3895 accused of suspending an anti-Hillary focussed account and  
3896 de-emphasized popular hashtags. October 2017 Twitter barred  
3897 Marsha Blackburn's campaign video for an ad platform, calling  
3898 it inflammatory.

3899 November 2017, rogue -- a single rogue employee deactivated  
3900 Trump's account for 11 minutes. That's shocking that a single  
3901 rogue employee could actually have that much authority to do that.

3902  
3903 That's a different question for a different day, maybe.  
3904 July 2018, Twitter was accused of limiting visibility of certain  
3905 Republican politicians by preventing their official accounts from  
3906 appearing in sites -- auto-populated drop down searches -- search  
3907 bar results.

3908 August 2018, conservative activist Candace Owens' account  
3909 was suspended after, essentially, imitating a account from a New  
3910 York Times editorial board member, Susan -- I think I am  
3911 pronouncing this right -- Jeong. Are you familiar with this?

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3912 Mr. Dorsey. Yes.

3913 Mr. Mullin. Let me read what Ms. Jeong wrote:

3914 "#cancelwhitepeople. White people marking up the internet with  
3915 their opinions like dogs pissing on fire hydrants. Are white  
3916 people genetically predisposed to burn faster in the sun, thus  
3917 logically being only fit to live underground like grovelling  
3918 goblins? Oh, man, it's kind of sick how much I enjoy -- or, how  
3919 much joy I get out of being cruel to old white men. I open my  
3920 mouth to populate -- to politely greet a Republican but nothing  
3921 but an unending cascade of vomiting flows from my mouth."

3922 Now, that same tweet went out by Candace Owens but replaced  
3923 Jewish for white. Ms. Owens' account was suspended and flagged.  
3924 The New York Times reporter's account wasn't.

3925 What's the difference?

3926 Mr. Dorsey. We -- so we did make a mistake with Owens --

3927 Mr. Mullin. But I've heard you say that multiple times --  
3928 we made a mistake -- we made a mistake. I've heard you say that  
3929 the whole time you have been up here, and you have been very polite  
3930 and pretty awesome at doing it.

3931 But the fact is it's bigger than a mistake. It's the  
3932 environment to which I think Twitter has. My point of the first  
3933 question was does that fit your political views to which your

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3934 company is following? Because there seems to be --

3935 The Chairman. The gentleman's time --

3936 Mr. Mullin. -- a pattern here.

3937 Mr. Dorsey. No, it doesn't. I value variety in perspective  
3938 and I value seeing people from all walks of life and all points  
3939 of views, and we do make errors along the way both in terms of  
3940 our algorithms and also the people who are following guidelines  
3941 to review content.

3942 Mr. Mullin. The --

3943 The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired.

3944 Mr. Mullin. Thank you. I yield back.

3945 The Chairman. The chair recognizes the gentleman from  
3946 Michigan, Mr. Walberg, for four minutes.

3947 Mr. Walberg. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr.  
3948 Dorsey, for being here, and it's been a long day for you. It's  
3949 an important day, though.

3950 I guess the only complaint I would have thus far is that  
3951 your staff didn't prepare well enough to go through 535 members  
3952 of Congress to see if there were any biases and have those figures  
3953 for us today that you could answer.

3954 I would assume that they should have thought that with  
3955 Republicans and Democrats here and the statements that we've heard

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3956 from the other side of the aisle that that question would come  
3957 up -- those facts, those statistics -- at least on the members  
3958 -- 535 members.

3959 It would have been worth being able to answer right today  
3960 with an imperative no, there was no bias, or yes, it appears there  
3961 was a bias. That's the only complaint I have.

3962 But let me -- let me go to the questions. In a July 26th,  
3963 blog post, Twitter asserted, and I quote, "We believe the issue  
3964 had more to do with how other people were interacting with these  
3965 representatives' accounts."

3966 What specific signals or actions of other accounts  
3967 interacting with the representative's account would you suggest  
3968 -- this is my question -- contributed to the auto suggest issue?

3969 Mr. Dorsey. The behaviors we were seeing were actual  
3970 violations of our terms of service.

3971 Mr. Walberg. Clear violations of your terms -- would muting  
3972 or blocking another user's account contribute to that?

3973 Mr. Dorsey. No. These were reported violations that we  
3974 reviewed and found in violation.

3975 Mr. Walberg. And retweeting or boosting wouldn't be a  
3976 contribution to what you did either. Does Twitter have policies  
3977 and procedures in place to notify accounts or users when their

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3978 messages or content have been hidden from other users?

3979 Mr. Dorsey. We don't have enough of this so we don't --  
3980 we do have a lot of work to do to help people understand why --  
3981 right in the products why we might rank or why we might filter  
3982 or put their content behind an interstitial, and that is an area  
3983 of improvement. So we haven't done enough work there.

3984 Mr. Walberg. So while -- and I appreciate the fact you don't  
3985 -- you don't want to have users be responsible for contacting  
3986 you about issues, you ought to be catching some of this stuff.

3987

3988 You have no specific time line or strong policy in place  
3989 to notify me, for instance, that there's a reason why you have  
3990 taken me down, blocked or whatever, for the time being so I can  
3991 at least respond to that and can make a change so that I am a  
3992 productive positive member of Twitter.

3993 Mr. Dorsey. Well, if we take any enforcement action that  
3994 results in removal of content or asking the removal you get  
3995 notified immediately.

3996 Mr. Walberg. Immediately?

3997 Mr. Dorsey. It's just a question of the filtering or the  
3998 time ranking that we don't have a great way of doing this today.

3999

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4000           It is our intention to look deeper into this but -- and I  
4001 know this is a frustrating answer but the time lines are a little  
4002 bit unpredictable. But we do believe that transparency is an  
4003 important concept for us to push because we want to earn more  
4004 people's trust.

4005           Mr. Walberg. With regard to internet service providers,  
4006 they're required to disclose if they are throttling or blocking  
4007 their services. Of course, that's been a big issue.

4008           Would you be open to a similar set of transparency rules  
4009 when you have taken actions that could be viewed as blocking or  
4010 throttling of content?

4011           Mr. Dorsey. We are considering a transparency report around  
4012 our actions regarding content like this. We are in the phases  
4013 right now of understanding what is going to be most useful in  
4014 designing the document and then to do the engineering work to  
4015 put it in place we can aggregate all the information.

4016           But I do think it's a good idea and something that I do think  
4017 helps earn people's trust.

4018           Mr. Walberg. Well, I wish you well on it because I don't  
4019 want to be like my colleagues on the other side of the aisle that  
4020 want to regulate. This is the amazing social media opportunity  
4021 we have.

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4022           We want to keep it going -- keep it going proper. I don't  
4023 want to see government get involved in regulating if you folks  
4024 can do the job yourselves.

4025           Thank you. I yield back.

4026           The Chairman. The gentleman yields back.

4027           The chair recognizes Mr. Duncan for four minutes.

4028           Mr. Duncan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Dorsey, thank  
4029 you for being here. We've heard a lot today about content  
4030 filters, shadow banning, and a little bit about bias, and I would  
4031 like to focus on bias for just a second.

4032           A member of my staff recently created a test Twitter account  
4033 working on a communications project unrelated to this topic and  
4034 even before we knew that this hearing was going to take place.

4035           They were interested to note who was listed on the  
4036 "suggestions for you to follow" list. This is a pro-life  
4037 conservative congressional staffer on a work computer whose  
4038 search history definitely doesn't lean left. All they entered  
4039 was an email address and a 202 area code phone number.

4040           Yet, here's who Twitter suggested they follow, and you will  
4041 see it on the screen: Nancy Pelosi, Kamala Harris, John Dingell,  
4042 Chuck Schumer, John Kerry, Ben Rhodes, David Axelrod, Kirsten  
4043 Gillibrand, Jim Acosta, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Paul Krugman,

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4044 Madeline Albright, Claire McCaskill, Chuck Todd, and Jon Lovett  
4045 -- all left leaning political types. That's all she got as  
4046 "suggested for you to follow."

4047           Forget the fact that there aren't any Republicans or  
4048 conservatives on that list. No singers, no actors, no athletes,  
4049 no celebrities. She's a 20-something female staffer. Didn't  
4050 even get Taylor Swift, Chris Pratt, Christiano Ronaldo, or Kim  
4051 Kardashian. All she got was the suggestions that I had on the  
4052 screen.

4053           Look, it's one thing not to promote conservatives even though  
4054 Donald Trump is the -- truly, the most successful Twitter user  
4055 in history of the site. Say what you want about what he tweets  
4056 but President Trump has utilized Twitter in unprecedented ways  
4057 to get around the traditional news media.

4058           I would think that someone in your position would be  
4059 celebrating that and him rather than trying to undermine him.

4060           So how do you explain how a female 20-something-year-old who  
4061 just put in an email address and a 202 area code -- why does she  
4062 only get the liberal suggestions?

4063           Mr. Dorsey. We simply don't have enough information in that  
4064 case to build up a more informed suggestion for her. So the 202  
4065 number is all we have so therefore --

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4066 Mr. Duncan. So I get that you don't have much information  
4067 on her. One hundred percent of the suggested followers were  
4068 biased. Where was Kim Kardashian? Huge Twitter -- where was  
4069 Taylor Swift? Where was Ariana Grande?

4070 In fact, I can look at Twitter, most followers, and they're  
4071 not these people that you suggested for her. There was nothing  
4072 in her -- on her search history on a government work computer  
4073 to suggest that she was left leaning or right leaning or anything.

4074 Katy Perry, number one -- she wasn't on this list. How do you  
4075 explain that?

4076 Mr. Dorsey. I think it was just looking at the 202 as a  
4077 D.C. number and then taking D.C.-based accounts and the most  
4078 followed, probably, or most engaged with D.C. accounts. As --

4079 Mr. Duncan. In the 202 area code area?

4080 Mr. Dorsey. In the 202 area code.

4081 Mr. Duncan. Okay. Where's Bryce Harper? Where's  
4082 Ovechkin? Where are the Capitols? Where are the Nats? Where's  
4083 D.C. United? Where are the sports teams?

4084 If you're going to use 202 area code and say that's one of  
4085 the filters, where are those folks, you know, outside of the  
4086 political arena? There are no athletes. There are no singers.  
4087 There are no celebrities.

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4088           There were only suggested political figures of a very liberal  
4089 persuasion that were suggested for her to follow. Nobody else.  
4090 That shows bias, sir.

4091           Mr. Dorsey. Well, yes. I mean, we do have a lot more work  
4092 to do in terms of our onboarding and, obviously, you're pointing  
4093 out some weaknesses in our -- in our signals that we use to craft  
4094 those recommendations.

4095           So I -- you know, as she continues -- if she were to start  
4096 following or following particular accounts or engaging with  
4097 particular tweets, that model would completely change, based on  
4098 those.

4099           We just don't have information. It sounds like we are not  
4100 being exhaustive enough with the one piece of information we do  
4101 have, which is her area code.

4102           Mr. Duncan. Mr. Dorsey, let me ask you this. After this  
4103 hearing and me, clearly, showing this bias and a lot of other  
4104 questions, if someone in a 202 area code that's 28 years old sets  
4105 up a Twitter account with very limited information but has an  
4106 email address and a 202 area code --

4107           The Chairman. Gentleman's time --

4108           Mr. Duncan. -- are you going to tell me today that they're  
4109 going to get other suggested followers than the liberals that

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4110 I mentioned?

4111 Mr. Dorsey. That is not a good outcome for us.

4112 The Chairman. Gentleman's time has expired.

4113 Mr. Duncan. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

4114 The Chairman. The chair recognizes the gentlelady from  
4115 California, Mrs. Walters, for four minutes.

4116 Mrs. Walters. Thank you, Mr. Dorsey, for being here.

4117 News reports indicate that Periscope -- as you know, is  
4118 Twitter's live video feed app -- is being used to sexually exploit  
4119 children. These reports detail the targeting of children as  
4120 young as nine years old.

4121 At times, coordinated activity for multiple users is  
4122 employed to persuade children to engage in sexual behavior.  
4123 These videos can be live streamed in public or private broadcasts  
4124 on Periscope.

4125 I recognize that a live video app like Periscope creates  
4126 challenges, especially when attempting to monitor content in real  
4127 time.

4128 Yet, your testimony discussing malicious election-related  
4129 activity on Twitter reads, quote, "We strongly believe that any  
4130 such activity on Twitter is unacceptable."

4131 I hope that standard of unacceptability is similarly applied

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4132 to sexual exploitation of children on Periscope, and I would  
4133 expect that it is, considering that Twitter has stated zero  
4134 tolerance policy for child sexual exploitation.

4135 So my questions are does Twitter primarily rely on users  
4136 to report sexually inappropriate content or content concerning  
4137 child safety?

4138 Mr. Dorsey. We do have some dependency on reports. But  
4139 this is an area that we want to move much faster in automating  
4140 and not, obviously, placing the blame -- or not placing the work  
4141 on the victim and making sure that we are recognizing these in  
4142 real time, and we have made some progress with Periscope.

4143 Mrs. Walters. So what is the average length of a live video  
4144 on Periscope?

4145 Mr. Dorsey. I am not aware of that right now. But we can  
4146 -- we can follow up.

4147 Mrs. Walters. Okay. And what is the average response time  
4148 to remove a live video on Periscope that is deemed to violate  
4149 Twitter's term of service?

4150 Mr. Dorsey. It depends entirely on the severity of the  
4151 report and what the context is. So we try to prioritize by  
4152 severity. So threats of death or suicidal tendencies would get  
4153 a higher priority than everything else.

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4154 Mrs. Walters. So just out of curiosity, when you say we  
4155 try to eliminate and we have a -- we have a higher priority, like,  
4156 who makes that decision?

4157 Mr. Dorsey. We have -- so when people report any violations  
4158 of our terms of service, we have algorithms looking at the report  
4159 and then trying to understand how to prioritize those reports  
4160 so they're seen by humans much faster.

4161 Mrs. Walters. Okay. So I would assume that you don't  
4162 believe that you use the reporting as an effective method for  
4163 monitoring live videos on Periscope then?

4164 Mr. Dorsey. Not over the long term.

4165 Mrs. Walters. Well, obviously, this is a really, really  
4166 important issue. Is user reporting an effective method for  
4167 monitoring private broadcasts on Periscope?

4168 Mr. Dorsey. Also not over the long term. But that is  
4169 something that we need to do much more work around in terms of  
4170 automating these.

4171 Mrs. Walters. So can you indicate that you need to do some  
4172 more work around this? Do you have any time frame of when you  
4173 think you will be able to get this handled?

4174 Mr. Dorsey. We'd like to work as quickly as possible and  
4175 make sure that we are prioritizing the proactive approaches of

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4176 our enforcement and, again, it does go down that prioritization  
4177 stack. But we intend to move as quickly as we can. I know that  
4178 it's frustrating not to hear a particular time frame. But we  
4179 are -- we are moving fast.

4180 Mrs. Walters. Can you explain the type of technology that  
4181 you're using in order to change this?

4182 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. We'll be -- we'll be utilizing a lot of  
4183 machine learning and deep learning in order to look at all of  
4184 our systems at scale and then also prioritize the right review  
4185 cadence.

4186 Mrs. Walters. Okay. I yield back the balance of my time.  
4187 Thank you.

4188 The Chairman. The gentlelady yields back.

4189 The chair recognizes Mr. Carter, Georgia, our last member  
4190 to participate -- thank you -- for four minutes.

4191 Mr. Carter. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Dorsey,  
4192 congratulations. I am the last one.

4193 Mr. Dorsey, in preparation for this hearing, I sent out a  
4194 notice throughout my district and I asked them -- I let them know  
4195 that we were having this hearing and I was going to be asking  
4196 questions and I said, what do you think I ought to ask him.

4197 So I got back some pretty interesting responses for that

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4198 and one of them came from a teenage high school student -- a  
4199 conservative teenage high school student down in Camden County.  
4200 That's right on the Georgia/Florida state line.

4201 And he said -- he said, you know, I am a conservative teenage  
4202 high school student and I've got -- I am on Twitter and I've got  
4203 over 40,000 followers, yet I have tried -- this young man had  
4204 tried five times to get verification and yet he's been turned  
4205 down all five times.

4206 And his question to me was, I've got friends who are more  
4207 liberal than me who've got less followers than me and yet they've  
4208 been verified. Why is that? What should I tell him?

4209 Mr. Dorsey. So we -- first and foremost, we believe we need  
4210 a complete reboot of our verification system. It's not serving  
4211 us. It's not serving the people that we serve, well. We -- it  
4212 really depends on when his friends were verified.

4213 We had an open verification system not too long ago that  
4214 looked for various criteria and we verified people based on that.

4215 And it's not a function of how many followers you have. We have  
4216 some verified folks who only have 5,000 followers. We --

4217 Mr. Carter. That was his point. I mean, he had 40,000.  
4218 He couldn't -- and he doesn't understand. I don't know what  
4219 to tell him. I mean --

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4220 Mr. Dorsey. Yes.

4221 Mr. Carter. -- you know, it seems to me like he would have  
4222 been verified and from what he explained to me and to staff is  
4223 that they were -- they applied at the same time.

4224 Mr. Dorsey. Yes. It --

4225 Mr. Carter. So why was he denied and they were approved?

4226 Mr. Dorsey. I would need to understand his particular case.

4227 So I would want to know his name and we can follow up --

4228 Mr. Carter. I will be glad -- we will get you that  
4229 information because I would like to give the young man an  
4230 explanation. Okay. I think he deserves it.

4231 Mr. Dorsey. Okay.

4232 Mr. Carter. All right. And let me ask you something, and  
4233 I apologize, but being the last one sometimes you're a little  
4234 bit redundant.

4235 But you were asked earlier because, you know, this committee  
4236 and particular the Health Subcommittee has been the tip of the  
4237 spear, if you will, with the opioid crisis that we have in our  
4238 country.

4239 As you're aware, we are losing 115 people every day to opioid  
4240 addiction, and we just talked about the algorithms and you have  
4241 been talking about it all day about and, you know, why is it --

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4242 why is it that we haven't been able to get these sites off?

4243 What's missing? I mean, what are you identifying that  
4244 you're missing not to be able to get these tweets off?

4245 Mr. Dorsey. I don't know if it's -- I think it's more of  
4246 a new behavior and a new approach. It's --

4247 Mr. Carter. This has been going on quite a while.

4248 Mr. Dorsey. It's certainly not an excuse. We need to look  
4249 at these more deeply in terms of, like, how our algorithms are  
4250 automatically determining when we see this sort of activity and  
4251 taking action much faster.

4252 Mr. Carter. Okay. Fair enough.

4253 My last question is this, and I want to talk about  
4254 intellectual property, particularly as it relates to live  
4255 streaming.

4256 Now, you have been here all day. You were over at the Senate  
4257 this morning and you have been here this afternoon, and all day  
4258 long, you know, you have been saying -- and we have no other reason  
4259 but to believe you -- yeah, we need to work on this -- we are  
4260 going to work on this.

4261 The piracy that takes place with live streaming movies and  
4262 intellectual property like that, that's been going on for quite  
4263 a while, hasn't it?

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4264 Mr. Dorsey. It has.

4265 Mr. Carter. Why should I believe you -- and we had another  
4266 CEO of another social media that was here a couple of months ago  
4267 -- you know, same thing -- we are working on it -- we are going  
4268 to get it done.

4269 But yet, this is something that's been going on. You ain't  
4270 got it done yet. Why should I believe you now? And I say that  
4271 because, you know, Dr. Bucshon, Representative Walberg -- I echo  
4272 their comments -- I don't want the federal government to get into  
4273 this business. I don't want to regulate you guys. I think it'll  
4274 stifle innovation.

4275 But why should I believe you if you -- you hadn't got this  
4276 fixed?

4277 Mr. Dorsey. Well, the reason we have to still work on it  
4278 is because the methods of attack constantly change, and we'll  
4279 never arrive at one solution that fixes everything. We need to  
4280 constantly iterate based on new vectors of stealing IP or  
4281 rebroadcasting IP, for instance, because they're constantly  
4282 changing and we just need to be 10 steps ahead of that.

4283 Mr. Carter. You know, I want to believe you and I am going  
4284 to believe you. But I just have to tell you, I hope you believe  
4285 me -- we don't want the federal -- and you don't want the federal

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4286 government to be in this.

4287 I think the success of the internet and of your products  
4288 has been because the federal government stayed out of it. But  
4289 we got to have help. We have to have a commitment, and when I  
4290 look at this I think, why would I believe him if they've been  
4291 working on this and hadn't even got it fixed yet.

4292 Mr. Dorsey. Absolutely.

4293 The Chairman. The gentleman's time --

4294 Mr. Carter. Mr. Chairman, thank you, and I yield.

4295 Mr. Dorsey. Thank you.

4296 The Chairman. Thank you.

4297 And while we've been sitting here, I am told that Twitter  
4298 has deleted the account that was trying to sell drugs online.

4299 So your team has been at work. We appreciate that.

4300 We have exhausted probably you and your team and our members  
4301 questions for now. We do have some letters and questions for  
4302 the -- for the record -- concluding script.

4303 And so I, again, want to thank you for being here before  
4304 the committee. Some of our members, you know, didn't get to all  
4305 their questions and so we will be submitting those for the record,  
4306 and we have a number of things we'd like to insert in the record  
4307 by unanimous consent: a letter from Encompass, Consumer

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4308 Technology Association, and the Internet Association; an article  
4309 from Gizmodo; an article from Inc.; a paper by Kate Klonick; an  
4310 article from NBC; and article from Slate; an article from The  
4311 Verge.

4312 [The information follows:]

4313

4314 \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT 7\*\*\*\*\*

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4315           The Chairman. Pursuant to committee rules, I remind members  
4316 they have 10 business days to submit additional questions for  
4317 the record. I ask the witness to submit their response within  
4318 10 business days upon receipt of that question.

4319           We ask you remain seated until the Twitter team is able to  
4320 exit. So if you all would remain seated -- thank you -- then  
4321 our folks from Twitter can leave and, Mr. Dorsey, thank you again  
4322 for being before the Energy and Commerce Committee.

4323           And with that, the subcommittee is adjourned.

4324           [Whereupon, at 5:43 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]