Under White House Pressure, Facebook Censored Accurate Covid Vaccine Information

Description

> USA: Facebook's censorship of true information about the covid vaccine, discovered by the Attorney General of Missouri, could be a violation of the First Amendment
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> Under pressure from the White House, Facebook censored "often-true content" that a company executive said in the spring of 2021 "does not contain actionable misinformation" but was "discouraging vaccines."

The State Attorney General of Missouri, who is suing the Biden Administration for violating the First Amendment, released the email over the weekend.

"As you know," wrote the Facebook executive whose name was redacted, "in addition to removing vaccine misinformation, we have been focused on reducing the virality of content discouraging vaccines that does not contain actionable misinformation.

From: [redacted]@fb.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 21, 2021 11:25 PM
To: Slavitt, Andrew M. EOP/WHO <[redacted]@who.eop.gov>
Cc: Flaherty, Rob EOP/WHO <[redacted]@who.eop.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Follow up - Friday call w[redacted]

Andy,

Thanks for taking the time to connect on Friday. Per our discussion, I wan

1. **Consistent Product Team POC:** As discussed, we will make [redacted] product work that matters most to your teams, available on a regular basi time for [redacted] to connect with you and/or Rob (and whomever else mak
2. **Sharing Additional Data:** [redacted] mentioned the new internal analyt understand and monitor the most viral COVID vaccine-related content. Th updated on our progress and when we expect to be able to share the data
3. **Levers for Tackling Vaccine Hesitancy Content**: You also asked us vaccine hesitancy content. In addition to policies previously discussed, th approved late last week and that we'll be implementing over the coming w vaccine misinformation, we have been focused on reducing the virality of contain actionable misinformation. This is often-true content, which we a advised us that it is important for people to be able to discuss both their p vaccine, but it can be framed as sensation, alarmist, or shocking. We'll re they are disproportionately promoting this sensationalized content. More
4. **WhatsApp:** Finally--[redacted] mentioned the policies that apply to Wha misinformation focuses on limiting the virality of messages, preventing co seek out reliable sources of information both in and out of the product. O spread of viral content, such as forward limits and labels, privacy settings t groups, and simple ways for users to block accounts and make reports to W messages. Additional limitations we placed in April 2020 on forwarding of times reduced these kinds of messages by over 70%.

Along with these commitments, we'll continue to provide updated data fr be happy to walk through this data with our research director, if helpful.

Thanks again--and please let me know if there's anything I'm missing or ca

The email shows Facebook responding defensively to the White House's then-covid advisor, Andy Slavitt. "This often-true content," wrote Facebook, "which we allow at the post level because experts have advised us that it is important for people to be able to discuss both their personal experiences and concerns about the vaccine, but it can be framed as sensation[al], alarmist, or shocking."

"We'll remove these Groups, Pages, and Accounts when they are disproportionately promoting this sensationalized content," said the Facebook executive in an email responding to White House demands for censorship. "More on this front as we proceed to implement."

Another White House official wrote in an angry, scolding email to Facebook, "We are gravely concerned that your service is one of the top drivers of vaccine hesitancy – period." The official said it believed Facebook was at risk of "doing the same" thing it did before the Jan 6, 2021 riot at the US Capitol when "an insurrection …was plotted, in large part, by your platform."

All of these censorship demands were occurring against a backdrop of the White House and Congress regularly threatening to revoke Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, which indemnifies social media platforms from liability for content posted by users. The social media platforms consider Section 230 repeal an existential threat. Without the Act, they would not be able to exist in their current form.

Aaron Kheriaty, a former professor at the University of California Irvine School of Medicine and a plaintiff in the Attorneys General case, wrote in the Wall Street Journal, "The First Amendment bars [the] government from engaging in viewpoint-based censorship."

What's more, the White House had the same impact on Twitter.

Martin Kulldorff
@MartinKulldorff

No. Thinking that everyone mus
scientifically flawed as thinking
COVID vaccines are important f
people, and their care-takers. T
infection do not need it. Nor chi

Misleading
Learn why health officials recommend a vaccin

This Tweet can't be replied to, shared or liked.

EndemicEquilibrium @ElectraAscendin · M
Replying to @MartinKulldorff
Dr Kulldorff, do you think younger age groups a
virus need to be vaccinated? I am not an antiva
about this one. It seems to be a religious mantr
vaccinated

Category

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