

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

2138 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6216

(202) 225-6906  
judiciary.house.gov

October 30, 2024

Mr. Sundar Pichai  
Chief Executive Officer  
Alphabet  
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway  
Mountain View, CA 94043

Dear Mr. Pichai:

The Committee on the Judiciary and the Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government continue to conduct oversight of how and to what extent the Executive Branch has coerced or colluded with companies and other intermediaries to censor lawful speech.<sup>1</sup> As part of this oversight, the Committee has obtained documents showing that the Biden-Harris Administration successfully pressured YouTube, a subsidiary of Alphabet, to censor certain content, including content that did not violate YouTube's content moderation policies.<sup>2</sup> Now, YouTube appears to have censored the video of Joe Rogan's recent interview with President Donald Trump.<sup>3</sup> We write to seek an immediate briefing on (1) YouTube's decision to censor Joe Rogan's interview with President Trump; and (2) Google Search's elevation of material critical of the interview.

On October 25, 2024, Joe Rogan posted his interview with President Trump on his YouTube channel, quickly accumulating tens of millions of views.<sup>4</sup> However, just three days later, on October 28, YouTube users reported difficulty searching for the video on YouTube.<sup>5</sup> Recent news coverage reports that "search[es] on YouTube using the terms 'Joe Rogan Trump' or 'Joe Rogan Donald Trump' did not bring up Friday's three-hour sit-down at the top of the

---

<sup>1</sup> See Ryan Tracy, *Facebook Bowed to White House Pressure, Removed Covid Posts*, WALL ST. J. (July 28, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., STAFF OF THE H. COMM. ON THE JUDICIARY AND THE SELECT SUBCOMM. ON THE WEAPONIZATION OF THE FED. GOV'T OF THE H. COMM. ON THE JUDICIARY, 118TH CONG., *THE CENSORSHIP INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX: HOW TOP BIDEN WHITE HOUSE OFFICIALS COERCED BIG TECH TO CENSOR AMERICANS, TRUE INFORMATION, AND CRITICS OF THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION* (Comm. Print May 1, 2024), at 6, 52-66.

<sup>3</sup> See Taylor Herzlich, *YouTube, Google accused of censorship as Joe Rogan's Trump interview nearly impossible to find in search: 'No sensible explanation'*, N.Y. POST (Oct. 28, 2024).

<sup>4</sup> PowerfulJRE, *Joe Rogan Experience #2219 - Donald Trump*, YOUTUBE (Oct. 25, 2024), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBMoPUAeLnY&ab\\_channel=PowerfulJRE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBMoPUAeLnY&ab_channel=PowerfulJRE).

<sup>5</sup> Taylor Herzlich, *YouTube, Google accused of censorship as Joe Rogan's Trump interview nearly impossible to find in search: 'No sensible explanation'*, N.Y. POST (Oct. 28, 2024).

list.”<sup>6</sup> The interview “also was notably absent from YouTube’s trending page on Monday.”<sup>7</sup> Rather, when users searched for the video, they were reportedly fed “results of videos from traditional media outlets, like *The Hill*, MSNBC and Fox News, and their coverage of the interview.”<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Google Search results for the interview also reportedly “populated anti-Trump results.”<sup>9</sup>

In response, YouTube released a statement acknowledging the censorship of Rogan’s interview with President Trump, claiming that “[f]or some searches on Monday the original 3-hour interview didn’t appear prominently. Short excerpts uploaded by the Joe Rogan channel appeared, but we know it was frustrating for users looking to find the full video.”<sup>10</sup> YouTube added that it was working “to resolve this and viewers will begin seeing the full podcast in more YouTube search results soon.”<sup>11</sup>

Additionally, on October 28, 2024, a *New York Times* reporter privately reached out to several conservative political commentators, asking for comment on an upcoming *Times* story about pseudo-analysis conducted by Media Matters for America, a left-wing organization, regarding so-called “election misinformation.”<sup>12</sup> The reporter also asked multiple conservative political commentators whether they are “member[s] of the YouTube Partner Program” and, if so, how frequently YouTube demonetized their videos.<sup>13</sup> Given Media Matters’s direct partisan ties and history of misleading allegations for political gain, it appears likely that the political actors would use the *Times* story to pressure YouTube to censor conservative speech and demonetize conservative voices.<sup>14</sup>

Americans deserve access to political speech, especially in the closing weeks before an election. Given the company’s recent history of censorship, including at the behest of the Biden-Harris Administration, YouTube’s censorship of former President Trump is particularly troubling. Therefore, we request an immediate briefing about (1) YouTube’s censorship of Joe Rogan’s October 25, 2024, video featuring his interview with former President Trump; and (2) Google Search’s elevation of anti-Trump stories about the interview. For the briefing, we ask that Alphabet please be prepared to answer the following questions:

---

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> YouTubeInsider (@YouTube Insider), X (Oct. 28, 2024, 5:40 PM), <https://x.com/YouTubeInsider/status/1851016296269242434>.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> *See, e.g.*, Tucker Carlson (@TuckerCarlson), X (Oct. 28, 2024, 9:49 PM)

<https://x.com/TuckerCarlson/status/1851078772327661601>; Ben Shapiro (@benshapiro), X (Oct. 28, 2024, 8:40 PM), <https://x.com/benshapiro/status/1851061597286060401>.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> *See, e.g.*, Clio Chang & Alex Shephard, *What Happens to Media Matters in a Post-Hillary World?*, THE NEW REPUBLIC (Dec. 19, 2016) (“The organization [has] long ceased to be a mere watchdog, having positioned itself at the center of a group of public relations and advocacy outfits whose mission was to help put Clinton in the White House.”).

1. Who at Alphabet is responsible for the October 25, 2024 video featuring Joe Rogan's interview with former President Trump not appearing in YouTube's top search results?
2. How did executives at Alphabet learn that the October 25, 2024 video featuring Joe Rogan's interview with former President Trump was unable to be viewed in YouTube's top search results?
3. Why was the October 25, 2024 video featuring Joe Rogan's interview with former President Trump unable to be viewed in YouTube's top search results?
4. Was this censorship done by automated systems or was it carried out manually?
5. For how long was this issue in effect? During this time, how many Americans searched YouTube for Joe Rogan's interview with President Trump?
6. Which teams or divisions within YouTube are responsible for determining whether a video is displayed in YouTube's top search results?
7. Which teams or divisions within YouTube were responsible for correcting this issue?
8. Has YouTube prevented any other video featuring an interview with former President Trump from being viewed in YouTube's top search results? If so, which ones?
9. What protections does YouTube provide for speech that is explicitly political? Why did those protections not apply here?
10. How can the American people be confident that a similar issue, whether intentional or not, will not occur again?
11. What communications did YouTube have with the Biden-Harris Administration regarding Joe Rogan's interview with President Trump?
12. Why is Google Search elevating negative stories regarding Joe Rogan's interview with President Trump in its search results?
13. What steps, if any, has Google Search taken to correct its elevation of stories that are negative towards President Trump in its search results?
14. Did Google Search have any correspondence or communication with the Biden-Harris Administration referring or relating to elevating or demoting certain stories about President Trump in its search results?

15. Has YouTube had any correspondence or communication with anyone in the Biden-Harris Administration referring or relating to alleged “election misinformation” on the platform by conservative commentators identified by Media Matters for America?

Please arrange for this briefing as soon as possible, but no later than 10:00 am on November 13, 2024. Pursuant to the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee on the Judiciary has jurisdiction to conduct oversight of matters concerning “civil liberties” to inform potential legislative reforms.<sup>15</sup> In addition, House Resolution 12 authorized the Committee’s Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government to investigate “issues related to the violation of the civil liberties of citizens of the United States.”<sup>16</sup> To arrange the briefing and if you have any questions about this matter, please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-6906.

Sincerely,



Jim Jordan  
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Jerrold L. Nadler, Ranking Member

---

<sup>15</sup> Rules of the House of Representatives R. X (2023).

<sup>16</sup> H. Res. 12 § 1(b)(1).