

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927
Minority (202) 225-3641

March 8, 2021

Mark Zuckerberg
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Facebook
1 Hacker Way
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg:

In the wake of the violent insurrection that occurred at the United States Capitol on January 6, we write regarding Facebook's advertising practices and certain types of advertising on its platform. According to recent troubling reports, Facebook ran ads showing gun accessories and protective equipment next to content that amplified election misinformation. Furthermore, similar advertising was shown next to news about the Capitol siege after January 6.¹ Targeting ads in this way is dangerous and has the potential to encourage acts of violence.

It is our understanding Facebook temporarily banned ads "that promote[d] weapons accessories and protective equipment in the US" through January 22. This was a good first step. However, reports suggest that users continued to receive ads for long-range hunting ammo following the ban.² Additionally, Facebook has not been transparent about what ads are being displayed and to whom they are being targeted.

Today, companies dedicate more than half their spending on global marketing for digital advertisements.³ With little ability to approve placement due to automated algorithms like those used by Facebook, companies and their shareholders have raised concerns about their ads appearing next to content that promotes violence and disinformation. With more than 100 million daily Facebook users in the United States, it is paramount that Facebook take responsibility for where it places advertisements and what those advertisements promote.

¹ *Facebook Will Temporarily Stop Showing Ads for Gun Accessories and Military Gear*, New York Times (Jan. 16, 2021).

² *Facebook Says It Will Pause Ads for Gun Accessories After Complaint*, BuzzFeed News (Jan. 16, 2021).

³ *Investors push Home Depot and Omnicom to steer ads from misinformation*, New York Times (Jan. 18, 2020).

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Furthermore, Facebook should inform advertisers about surrounding content, and make the necessary changes to guarantee that Facebook and companies' ad dollars are not further supporting or sowing seeds of hate and distrust throughout the country.

While it was encouraging that Facebook took action to ban certain types of troubling advertising on its platforms through January 22, more must be done since our nation continues to face a threat from violent domestic extremists. In fact, there has been little indication how Facebook is now addressing the targeting and placement of these types of ads or how it plans to address the concerns of companies who see their ads placed next to violent content. Furthermore, additional clarity and transparency is needed around how these ads are selected for users and what influence they may have on users, particularly those who are known to be active in extremist groups that peddle disinformation and conspiracy theories.

Facebook must immediately examine its advertising practices and make substantive changes to its policies to avoid future instances of ad placements and targeting that promote violence. We strongly believe Facebook has a moral obligation to take action regarding ads that stoke aggression. We also believe Facebook has a moral responsibility to provide transparency and tools to advertisers so they can avoid supporting purveyors of misinformation and disinformation, and promoters of violence.

To assist the Committee's ongoing oversight efforts, please provide written answers to the following questions by March 22, 2021:

1. What steps does Facebook plan to take to ensure that advertisements for weapons or other tactical military equipment and accessories are not targeted in a manner that can jeopardize public safety?
2. What procedures and processes does Facebook have in place for reviewing the audience of advertisements for weapons or other tactical military equipment and accessories on its platforms? Please provide a concise step-by-step summary of the review process.
3. Does Facebook have dedicated staff to monitor and approve the targeting of advertisements for weapons or other tactical military equipment or accessories on its platform? If so, how many staff are assigned to this process? If no dedicated staff are monitoring such advertisement targeting, please explain in more detail why.
4. Are companies whose advertisements appear on Facebook aware or notified that their ads are being placed next to content that includes misinformation, disinformation, violence, hate speech, or voter suppression? If so, are they given the choice to opt out of those placements? If not, please explain the rationale for not providing this option.
5. Have any companies whose advertisements appeared on Facebook expressed concerns regarding the placement of their advertisements next to content that includes misinformation, disinformation, violence, hate speech, or voter suppression? If so, please

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describe those concerns, the types of companies who have raised such concerns, and what steps Facebook has taken to address those concerns.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter. Should you have any questions about this request, please contact Lisa Goldman or Gerald Leverich with the Majority Committee staff at (202) 225-2927.

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Mike Doyle
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress



Doris O. Matsui
Member of Congress



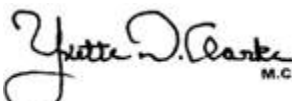
Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



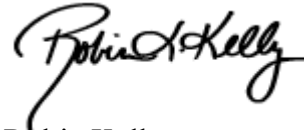
Tony Cardenas
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress



Robin Kelly
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A. Donald McEachin
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Lisa Blunt Rochester
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