

April 6, 2022

Mr. Sundar Pichai
Chief Executive Officer
Google, LLC
Alphabet, Inc.
1600 Amphitheater Parkway
Mountain View, CA 94043

Dear Mr. Pichai:

It has come to my attention that YouTube recently removed videos from the Conservative Political Action Conference's (CPAC) channel from the organization's February 2022 conference. YouTube claims the videos contain "misleading information," but did not provide details on what information it considered "misleading." In addition to removing the video, YouTube gave CPAC one strike on its account and offered no additional information regarding the censorship or a path forward for maintaining all or a portion of the video on its channel.

Ironically, a portion of one of the videos that YouTube removed was the panel discussion I participated in that focused on big-tech censorship and the repeated pattern of targeted attacks on conservative voices. For example, big-tech pushes its liberal ideology in America while submitting to authoritarian regimes and censoring that same ideology in other countries. Further, those same regimes are provided a platform and rarely face the same censorship shown toward conservatives in the United States. Citing protections under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, companies then actively pick and choose what viewpoints are approved speech. YouTube's actions further validate the points I and others made on the panel, namely the need for Congress to finally address the scope of Section 230.

The "Big 5" tech companies – Google, Facebook, Apple, Microsoft, and Amazon - hold a combined market share of more than \$9 trillion and control an even greater share of speech in America. Google and other large tech companies leave organizations like CPAC with little explanation and recourse when they are accused of violating community guidelines merely for expressing their political opinions or in this case, posting a video that contained political beliefs of others. It's no secret that these violations are often shrouded behind ambiguous user terms and agreements that can be broadly misapplied and have the appearance of viewpoint-based censorship rather than actual violations of policies or guidelines. The actions taken to reprimand CPAC require greater transparency and explanation. As such, I ask that you answer the following questions:

- What specific guidelines did CPAC's videos violate? Please provide the timestamps in the videos and exact quotes that YouTube found violated its guidelines and as a result justified the removal of the videos in their entirety.
- Please provide the steps that YouTube took to review the videos, which led to the determination that CPAC violated community guidelines. Specifically,
 - Were the videos flagged by another user first or did YouTube internally flag the videos?

- Did moderation software review the videos and send an automated reply to CPAC? If so, did a YouTube employee/contractor ever review and make a decision to remove the videos?
- When YouTube notified CPAC that content had been removed from its page, did it include a timestamp to point to the specific instances of community guideline violations? If not, why?
- If requested, are users able to receive the exact quote that resulted in the violations? If not, why?
- Please detail the appeals process, including the average response time to resolve an appeal request.
- Once a video is removed, does YouTube grant access of the file to the owners of the video or does the company retain the footage?

Please reply no later than April 22, 2022. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

In God We Trust,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Lankford". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and "L".

James Lankford
United States Senator