

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 8, 2017

Mr. Jack Dorsey  
Chief Executive Officer  
Twitter  
1355 Market Street, Suite 900  
San Francisco, CA 94103

Mr. Steve Huffman  
Chief Executive Officer  
Reddit  
520 Third Street, Suite 305  
San Francisco, CA 94107

Ms. Marissa Mayer  
Chief Executive Officer  
Yahoo! Inc.  
701 First Avenue  
Sunnyvale, CA 94089

Mr. David Karp  
Chief Executive Officer  
Tumblr  
35 E 21<sup>st</sup> Street, Ground Floor  
New York, NY 10010

Dear Mr. Dorsey, Mr. Huffman, Ms. Mayer, and Mr. Karp,

We write to draw your attention to the ongoing concerns we have with the rise of “fake news” on social media platforms. As you are aware, “fake news” played a role during the most recent presidential election campaign, and there are already reports that France’s presidential election is facing similar issues. Several of these misleading and false stories are part of a sophisticated campaign organized by Vladimir Putin and the Russian Federation to influence political outcomes that align with their interests. It is imperative that we do what we can to prevent foreign influence in our democracy, as well as other democracies around the world.

It is no secret that Vladimir Putin continues to utilize disinformation campaigns to gain influence in several European countries. Eastern European countries like Ukraine and Georgia have had to deal with Russian propaganda and disinformation for almost a decade, but several of our NATO allies are starting to see a rise in these efforts on their own shores.

According to a report prepared by the European Parliament Research Service, recent Russian disinformation efforts have reached Scotland, the Netherlands, Germany, and the United Kingdom. This has been done by the use of negative coverage from sources such as Russia Today or Sputnik News, but also through the use of fake social media accounts in order to spread false stories on various media platforms. Recently, the European Union warned that Russia was actively increasing its disinformation efforts to influence the French elections, as well as future elections in Germany, and the Netherlands. The level of this threat to America and its allies cannot be underestimated.

Congress remains concerned with the rise of disinformation and propaganda throughout the world. That is why several of us were proud to introduce the Countering Foreign Propaganda and Disinformation Act of 2016, which would help American allies counter foreign government propaganda from places like Russia, China, and other nations. Specifically, the legislation would create an interagency entity at the U.S. State Department to coordinate a whole-of-government

approach to countering foreign disinformation. The legislation would work with local partners in these affected countries in order to leverage their expertise to identify and defend against these sophisticated campaigns. We were very pleased to see this legislation included in the FY2017 National Defense Authorization Act, and we hope that there will be opportunities for social media and technology companies to partner on this cooperative effort.

We are encouraged by Snapchat's actions to combat "fake news," as well as the recent announcement by Facebook and Google to increase its efforts to combat the spread of disinformation during the French presidential campaign. Google and Facebook will launch a new collaborative platform that will allow the public to report any content they believe to be "fake news" and misleading information. Additionally, media companies and sources will partner with this platform to bring their expertise in order to identify potential disinformation pertaining to the political campaigns. This will assist users and technology companies in utilizing better methods to spot these misleading stories, and remove them before they reach a larger population. This new partnership is a good sign, but we remain concerned that several of your companies have not developed sufficient responses to the spread of disinformation.

We believe that your companies have an obligation to work with affected parties and countries to counter the belligerent use of misleading news stories by the Russians and Vladimir Putin in order to prevent any foreign influence in the democratic process. That is why we urge you to explain your strategy for combatting fake news on your media platforms. Specifically, we are interested to learn about your plans to combat the promotion of "fake news" advertising on your platforms. We would be particularly interested to know if you are developing specific tactics and responses to monitor and remove misleading content spread through your web sites.

It is imperative that we continue to develop responses to stop the spread of disinformation in order to ensure no foreign interference in the democratic process of our friends and allies.

We look forward to your response on this critical matter.

Sincerely,



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ADAM KINZINGER  
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress