

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Mark Zuckerberg
Facebook Inc.
575 7th St NW,
Washington, DC 20004

November 18, 2020

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg,

We write to you requesting Facebook make urgent changes to combat the disinformation of alleged voter fraud being promulgated on your platform which threatens to undermine faith in our election systems. We have identified multiple occasions in which Facebook has failed to label posts as containing false information, and even when labels are appended, the information provided to users is insufficient and lacks clarity. In comparison to other social media companies, Facebook's relatively minimal enforcement actions against misinformation and disinformation has allowed dangerous falsehoods to achieve wide reach. This is unacceptable and must be remedied immediately.

In a blogpost published on November 10th by Alex Schultz, Facebook's Vice President of Analytics and Chief Marketing Officer, the company made an assertion that political content is not reaching wide swaths of the platform's user base. Schultz used the measurements of "Top Pages by Reach From All Posts on Page" and "Top Publisher Domains by Reach of their Links" to argue that the majority of users frequent non-political pages like The Dodo and Steve Harvey.¹ However, using a Facebook owned analytics tool called CrowdTangle, which Schultz cites heavily in the blogpost, top-performing link posts by U.S. Facebook pages each day are almost entirely political posts, and frequently contain misleading information.²³ A large number of these top performing posts have appended labels from Facebook and include falsified information containing claims of mass voter fraud following the 2020 Presidential election.⁴⁵

In analyzing some of these top-performing link posts from U.S. publishers, we have identified multiple instances where Facebook has been inconsistent in appending labels that identity misinformation. For example, the below video from Newsmax was shared in two separate posts on November 11th, but only one of them was assigned an appended label with more information.⁶⁷ It is notable that the post with the wider reach (31K Shares) did not receive the appended label.

¹ Schultz, A. (2020, November 10). What Do People Actually See on Facebook in the US? *Facebook Newsroom*. <https://about.fb.com/news/2020/11/what-do-people-actually-see-on-facebook-in-the-us/>

² Facebook's Top 10. (2020, November 11). The top-performing link posts by U.S. Facebook pages in the last 24 hours are from: *Twitter*. <https://twitter.com/FacebooksTop10/status/1326551915593789450>

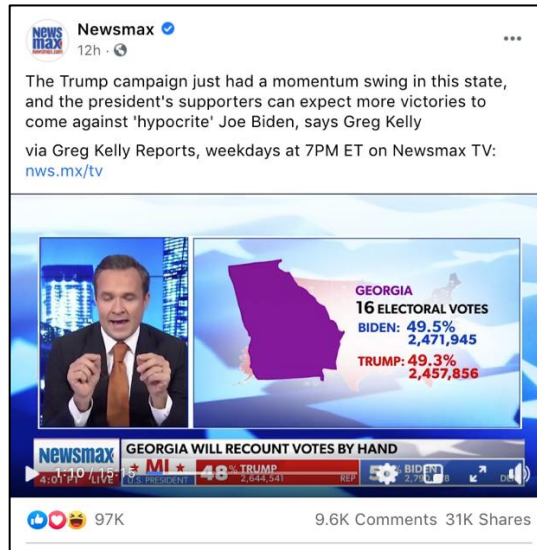
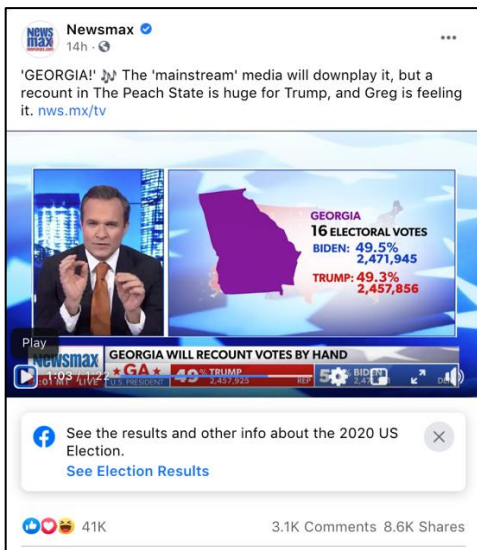
³ Facebook's Top 10. (2020, November 10). The top-performing link posts by U.S. Facebook pages in the last 24 hours are from: *Twitter*. <https://twitter.com/FacebooksTop10/status/1326245392212582400>

⁴ Newsmax. (2020, November 11). This is HUGE for Team Trump| Greg Kelly. *Facebook*. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=418947849269597>

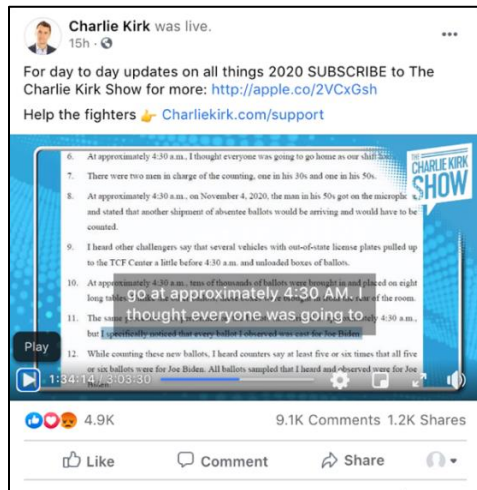
⁵ Trump, D. (2020, November 11). *Facebook*. <https://www.facebook.com/DonaldTrump/posts/10165805017210725>

⁶ Newsmax. (2020, November 11). Greg Kelly celebrates Georgia news. *Facebook*. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=736873950514243>

⁷ Newsmax. (2020, November 11). This is HUGE for Team Trump| Greg Kelly. *Facebook*. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=418947849269597>



An alarming number of posts from prominent verified pages do not have appended labels even though they contain voter fraud disinformation in the videos, images, or click through links but don't have overtly false claims in the post text. For instance, a recent video posted by Charlie Kirk contains allegations of “ballot interception” in key swing districts and tells his followers to “protect [themselves]” after the impending change in election results.⁸ The Daily Wire also posted an article on Facebook that insinuated that “thousands of suddenly emergent Biden votes are impossible,” urging its readers to not yet accept the election result.⁹



In an article posted by Dan Bongino, there is an embedded video that proclaims that “there has been a massive coordinated effort to steal this election from We the People of America, to manufacture votes for Joe Biden.”¹⁰ In another Newsmax post, there is an unlabeled video with a contributor telling the audience

⁸ Kirk, C. (n.d.). *The Charlie Kirk Show LIVE On Air—November, 10 2020*.

https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=2701571626761540&ref=watch_permalink

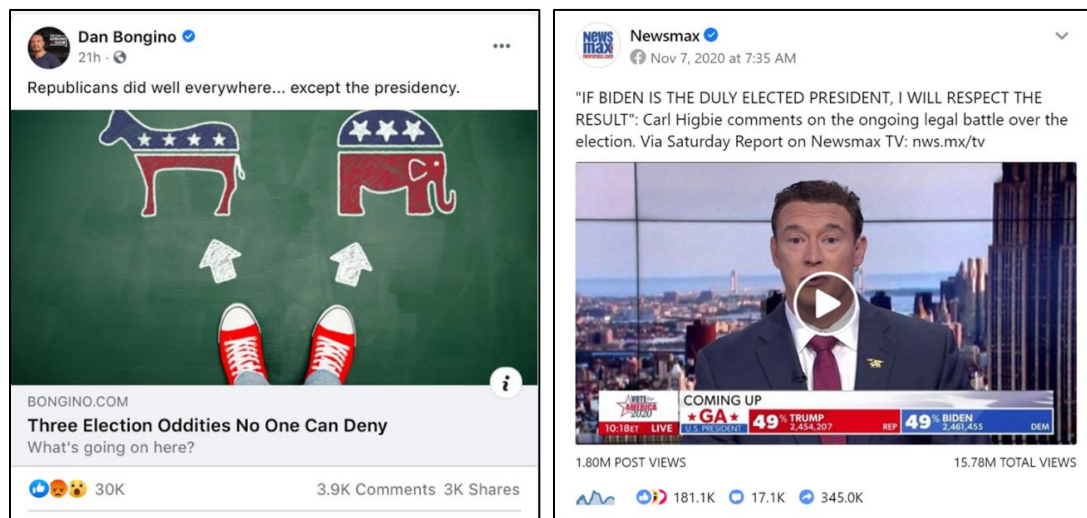
⁹ Klavan, S. (2020, November 9). Conservatives Must Hold The Line On Election. *The Daily Wire*.

<https://www.dailywire.com/news/conservatives-must-hold-the-line-on-election>

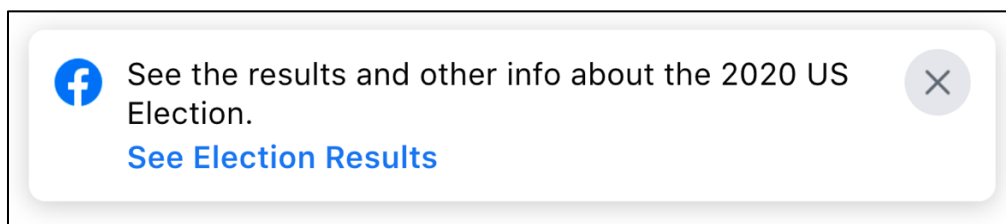
¹⁰ Palumbo, M. (2020, November 9). Three Election Oddities No One Can Deny. *The Dan Bongino Show*.

<https://bongino.com/three-election-oddities-no-one-can-deny>

that “there are huge alleged inconsistencies in the number of votes tallied” including “allegations of dead people voting.”¹¹ According to an analysis done through NewsWhip, this particular post was viewed by 1.8 million people, and the video was viewed 15.7 million times as of November 9th, 2020.¹²



Even in the instances in which Facebook does provide appended labels, it is usually unclear as to whether the label is signifying that the post contains misinformation or just identifying it as containing information related to the election. The vast majority of posts with visible disinformation contain the below appended label:

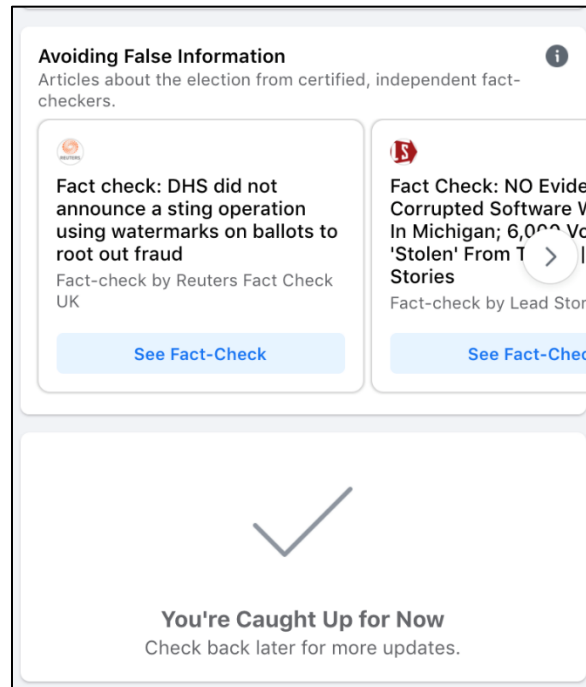


This label does not explicitly state whether the information provided in the published post is false or misleading. In response to several posts by President Donald J. Trump, the appended labels do say that “Joe Biden is the projected winner of the 2020 Presidential Election,” but there is no explicit rebuttal to his falsified claims of voter fraud. These labels are not strong enough to clearly indicate to a consumer of this media that the content is misleading or explicitly false.

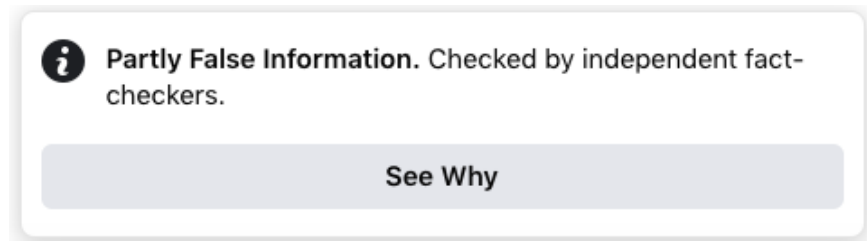
When these appended labels are clicked on there is an information section for Facebook users entitled “Avoiding False Information,” but in all instances this section is at the very bottom of the page and requires considerable scrolling to find. Also, these sections do not seem to be unique to each post and usually don’t share fact checking articles that refute the specific allegation made. As a result, the consumer is not provided with a verified article pertinent to the specific allegation and still has only read the original content containing misinformation.

¹¹ Newsmax. (2020, November 7). We need to be skeptical| Carl Higbie. *Facebook*. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=302819174046756>

¹² Kevin Roose. (2020, November 9). <https://twitter.com/kevinroose/status/1326022307693752322>



Only a small portion of posts contain the below label stating that the information in the post is false, and this is usually only when the shared content contains false information in the post text. These labels should be used more frequently and must be applied even when there is false information in the video, image, or click through link.



The efforts made by Facebook since the 2016 Presidential election to combat both misinformation and disinformation are not only insufficient but seem to be guided by a proclivity to appease right-wing interests. Facebook has fired employees who exposed the removal of fact checks on conservative websites and taken private meetings with conservative pundits. There is a clear correlation between the lack of enforcement on disinformation and political ties of the company's executives.^{13,14}

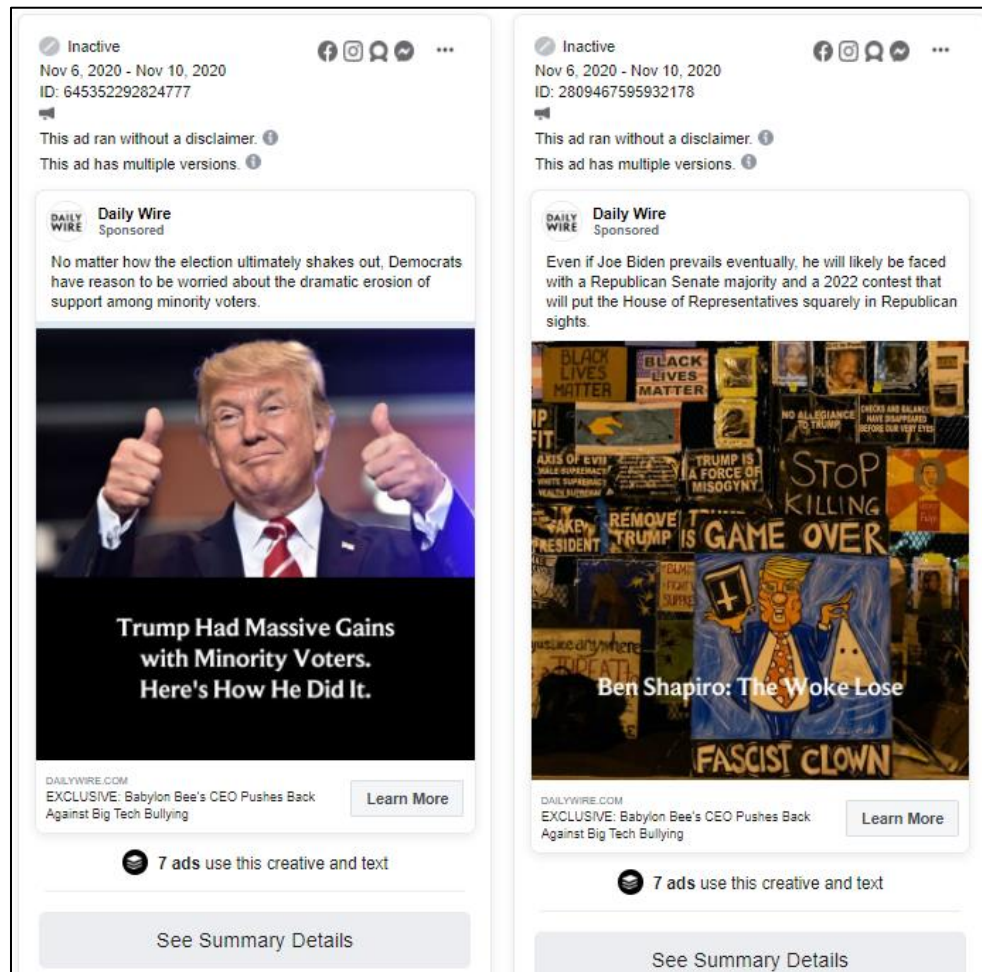
In a Facebook blogpost titled *Working to Stop Misinformation and False News*, there is a section that states the new policy will be to make it “as difficult as possible for people posting false news to buy ads on our platform through strict enforcement of our policies.”¹⁵ Below are Facebook advertisements by the Daily Wire that ran between November 6th and 10th, the same time frame that Facebook appended over 70 labels

¹³ Reports: Facebook Fires Employee Who Shared Proof of Right Wing Favoritism. (2020, August 7). *CBSN Bay Area*. <https://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2020/08/07/reports-facebook-fires-employee-who-shared-proof-of-right-wing-favoritism/>

¹⁴ Bertrand, N., & Lippman, D. (2019, October 14). Inside Mark Zuckerberg's private meetings with conservative pundits. *Politico*. <https://www.politico.com/news/2019/10/14/facebook-zuckerberg-conservatives-private-meetings-046663>

¹⁵ Working to Stop Misinformation and False News. (2020). *Facebook for Media*. <https://www.facebook.com/formedia/blog/working-to-stop-misinformation-and-false-news>

to their organic posts. This runs counter to the Facebook policy stated directly above and raises concerns again about selective enforcement based on the political lean of the publisher. It is also notable that these two advertisements ran for three days after the election results were projected and seem to question whether President-elect Joe Biden won the election.¹⁶



Facebook is not following its own policies, providing lackluster enforcement and assigning inadequate labeling of misinformation which make the policies essentially useless. The company's utter lack of respect for its own stated goals in monitoring and identifying misinformation has corroded the American public's trust in the democratic process. According to two recent public opinion polls conducted between November 6th and November 10th, between 70% and 86% of registered Republicans believe that the 2020 Presidential election was not a free and fair contest.^{17,18} It is safe to conclude that Facebook has contributed to this rapid loss of trust in the recent presidential election by allowing unchecked disinformation to be shared broadly with millions of Americans. It is your responsibility to take the reins of the company you created and

¹⁶Facebook. (2020). *Page Transparency: Daily Wire*.

[https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?active_status=all&ad_type=political_and_issue_ads&country=US&view_all_page_id=1435071773455316&sort_data\[direction\]=desc&sort_data\[mode\]=relevancy_monthly_grouped](https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?active_status=all&ad_type=political_and_issue_ads&country=US&view_all_page_id=1435071773455316&sort_data[direction]=desc&sort_data[mode]=relevancy_monthly_grouped)

¹⁷ Kim, C. (2020, November 9). Poll: 70 percent of Republicans don't think the election was free and fair. *Politico*.


<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/11/09/republicans-free-fair-elections-435488>

¹⁸ Bump, P. (2020, November 11). More than 8 in 10 Trump voters think Biden's win is not legitimate. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/11/11/more-than-8-in-10-trump-voters-think-bidens-win-is-not-legitimate/>

actively implement thorough and rigorous processes to stop the spread of misinformation which threatens to destroy the very institutions on which our nation, and subsequently Facebook, has been built.

We request an immediate response to this inquiry since this disinformation is ongoing and could undermine the integrity of the recent federal, state, and local elections.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Raja Krishnamoorthi", written in a cursive style.

Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Katie Porter", written in a cursive style.

Katie Porter
Member of Congress