

October 6, 2020

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

Dear Mr. Dorsey,

I write today to again urge you to implement strong accountability and transparency standards in the context of our nation's election, including to implement the requirements of the bipartisan Honest Ads Act. Twitter's existing ban on paid political content and restrictions on cause-based advertising ahead of this year's general election reflects an acknowledgement that social media platforms like Twitter can still be harnessed to spread false information, inflame social and racial tensions, and suppress voting participation. Rather than a continued ban on such advertisements – which has the effect of limiting the ability of new candidates and emerging issues to reach voters¹ – however, I would encourage you to reinstate these ads with the transparency and accountability protections contemplated in this important legislation.

Further, I ask that Twitter examine and strengthen its synthetic and manipulated media policy as it applies to political misinformation – particularly in the context of organic content. I appreciate the leadership Twitter has demonstrated to take steps against the promotion of false, deceptive, and manipulated political content; however, more must be done to secure our political discourse from disinformation on digital platforms like yours. Under your company's existing policy, manipulated media has still reached millions of users with only limited response from your platform.²

As you know, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence's bipartisan, five-part report documented the ways in which Russia took advantage of our openness and communications technologies, including exploiting American-bred social media platforms to spread disinformation, divide the public, and undermine our democracy. We also know the Russian campaign to undermine this year's elections are well underway. We must prepare for the efforts

¹ Shannon C. McGregor. November 4, 2019. "Why Twitter's ban on political ads isn't as good as it sounds." The Guardian. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/nov/04/twitters-political-ads-ban>

² See, e.g., Alex Chambers. March 10, 2020. "Twitter's 1st 'manipulated media' post? It came from the Whitehouse." ABC News. Retrieved from: <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/twitters-1st-manipulated-media-warning-white-house/story?id=69504259>; Quint Forgey. September 16, 2020. "Trump shares doctored video of Biden with 'manipulated media' Twitter tag". Politico. Retrieved from: <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/09/16/trump-doctored-video-joe-biden-twitter-415863>.

of bad actors to weaponize the scale and reach of social media via both paid advertising and organic content.

Unfortunately, our efforts to inhibit the rapid spread of disinformation is made more difficult by the proliferation of manipulated media created and disseminated by foreign and domestic bad actors. Again, I appreciate Twitter's efforts to label manipulated or synthetic content -- even from the President. However, it is evident that labeling has been wholly inadequate in either slowing the dissemination of deceptive content or properly contextualizing it for the majority of users.

Disinformation and misinformation on social media platforms like Twitter is a serious threat to the national security of the United States. As part of our continued commitment to ensuring our system is less vulnerable to abuse, I request your answers to the following questions:

1. How is Twitter ensuring that its ban on paid political content isn't being circumvented? Have there been instances of political content reaching users through paid promotions despite Twitter's prohibition? If so, how many? Will Twitter provide any public documentation of these lapses?
2. Will you consider more stringent warnings on policy manipulated or synthetic media distributed on your platform, particularly through more prominent disclaimers, including for content disseminated by the President? Further, would you consider removing posts with such content that could amplify foreign disinformation campaigns aimed at American voters?
3. Twitter has been accused of externalizing to researchers and investigative journalists the responsibility of policing misuse of its platform, even as it profits from such misuse in the context of fraudulent, false, and violating ads. Will Twitter adopt the equivalent of a bug bounty to remunerate researchers who identify violations of Twitter's policies, particularly in the context of advertisements that violate Twitter's terms of service and advertising policies?
4. What efforts has Twitter undertaken to slow the coordinated dissemination -- through advertising or organic content - of deceptive, synthetic, or manipulated media?
5. Will you commit to reinstate political advertisements under a regime that includes the transparency and accountability protections established by the Honest Ads Act?

As you know, Russia's attacks on our democracy were amplified by social media and our failure to prepare. We've also increasingly seen domestic actors utilize -- and iterate on -- the media manipulation techniques utilized by Russia, spreading disinformation and misinformation, sowing and exacerbating social, political and racial tensions, and undermining confidence in the upcoming election. Unfortunately, the failure of social media platforms to sufficiently address these threats -- and the failure of Congress to respond effectively through passage of essential regulation like the Honest Ads Act -- has meant that nearly three-quarters of Americans have

little or no confidence in large platforms preventing misuse of their services in the upcoming election.³

Ahead of the general election, I urge you to take all possible steps to reinforce Twitter's efforts against abuse of both your paid political content and cause-based advertising policies. I also request that you more aggressively identify, label, and remove manipulated or synthetic media ahead of the election to prevent the amplification of disinformation from Russia and those following their playbook.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Mark R. Warner

United States Senator

³ Ted Van Green, "Few Americans Are Confident in Tech Companies to Prevent Misuse of Their Platforms in the 2020 Election," *Pew Research* (September 9, 2020) available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/09/09/few-americans-are-confident-in-tech-companies-to-prevent-misuse-of-their-platforms-in-the-2020-election/>