

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

June 21, 2023

Neal Mohan  
Chief Executive Officer  
YouTube, LLC  
901 Cherry Avenue  
San Bruno, California 94066

Dear Mr. Mohan,

As concerned Members of Congress, we are seeking further information about the recent updates to the election misinformation approach on your platform. We have already seen how videos with election misinformation and disinformation have spread through social media and caused the most disastrous and violent of consequences. And we are deeply concerned with any change in policy that would once again allow misinformation concerning our elections to propagate and multiply online.

We commend YouTube for its actions in 2020 to commit to removing videos claiming widespread election fraud. We were also encouraged to see further actions in 2022, including linking people who search for election material on YouTube to authoritative results. We are glad to see that YouTube is still committed to taking down content that aims to mislead voters “about the time, place, means, or eligibility requirements for voting; false claims that could materially discourage voting, including those disputing the validity of voting by mail; and content that encourages others to interfere with democratic processes.”<sup>1</sup>

However, we believe that barring already illegal actions, such as voter intimidation, should be the bare-minimum, not the industry standard. Furthermore, major social media apps, such as YouTube, have a moral obligation to aid in combating misinformation at all times. As mentioned by a report from the Bipartisan Policy Center, to effectively preserve our democracy, social media platforms must incorporate their election-related efforts into their permanent plans and community guidelines.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, over 120 civil rights and democracy groups have called on major social media companies to “consistently enforce civic integrity policies during both election and non-election cycles.”<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, the recent YouTube statement released on June 2 claims that removing election misinformation content “could also have the unintended effect of curtailing political speech without meaningfully reducing the risk of violence or other real-world harm.”<sup>4</sup> Most alarming to us is the statement that “with that in mind, and with 2024 campaigns well underway, [YouTube] will stop removing content that advances false claims that widespread fraud, errors, or glitches occurred in the 2020 and other past US Presidential elections.”<sup>5</sup> As Members of Congress, we can attest to the violence and real-world harm that occurred due to false statements regarding the 2020 election. The attacks on our Capitol on January 6, 2021, and the lead-up to such

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<sup>1</sup> <https://blog.youtube/inside-youtube/us-election-misinformation-update-2023/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/report/how-to-protect-elections-online/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.commoncause.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Coalition-letter-for-2022-mid-terms-1.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://blog.youtube/inside-youtube/us-election-misinformation-update-2023/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://blog.youtube/inside-youtube/us-election-misinformation-update-2023/>

attacks, prove that social media platforms need continued infrastructure to combat threats, misinformation, and disinformation on their platforms.

We have also voiced concern over President Trump being reinstated on social media platforms, and continue to believe that two years later, we see unequivocally that Trump is still spreading the Big Lie and thus undermining our democracy. Trump's Big Lie is a cancer on the body politic, and allowing him to return and allowing his followers to echo election disinformation escalates a very serious risk to public safety.

We believe that part of YouTube's commitment to election integrity should be ensuring that those who maintain the unfounded, dangerous narrative of the 2020 election are not allowed or encouraged to spread the Big Lie in any form. It is not clear in your most recent statement where YouTube will draw the line between "authoritative sources" and politicians who use their role to intentionally spread lies to the American people. We would greatly appreciate further clarity on this matter and request a briefing on election integrity and misinformation on your platform.

Thank you for your careful attention to this important issue. We hope to continue engaging with you about what positive steps can be taken to protect our democracy and public safety.

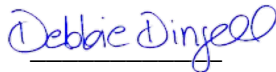
Sincerely,



Adam Schiff  
Member of Congress



Sheldon Whitehouse  
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress



Hank Johnson  
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego  
Member of Congress



Robert Garcia  
Member of Congress



Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress