

April 17, 2018

Dear Chairmen Grassley, Goodlatte, Thune, and Walden :

The United States is the birthplace of the internet, and it is America's commitment to freedom, the rule-of-law and free market capitalism that has allowed the internet to flourish. But as the internet matures, so too must the companies that have benefited most from its proliferation and adoption.

As conservative organizations representing millions of Americans we applaud your recent hearings on growing concerns about how dominant internet platforms are impacting hundreds of millions of Americans.

We are pleased that Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg answered your questions about privacy and their handling of user data, but given the variety and scope of troubling online conduct, we feel it is appropriate that future conversations include other internet platforms. Recent reports about Facebook's conduct join a growing list of platform enabled problems, including election interference, suppressing conservative voices, improper use of data, theft and more.

Fundamentally, many of the internet's problems result from a lack of accountability. It's an incredible tool, facilitating many socially and economically beneficial uses, but there is a widening gulf between the standards of conduct we expect offline and the behavior we witness online.

In the offline world, businesses are expected to take reasonable steps to prevent their services from being used to facilitate harmful activity. The same is not true online, where platforms are increasingly at the center of wrongdoing, but remain unaccountable for the abuse they enable.

In place of regulation, online companies were given the opportunity to police themselves, entrusted with wide latitude to fix problems associated with their products and services. However, over twenty years later we have little to show for this grant of trust. To the contrary, concerns continue to grow, and as a result, elected officials from both sides of the aisle are seeking answers and change.

We therefore support congressional oversight, which when done responsibly and with humility, is good for all Americans. And we hope future dialogue will shed more light on how we can fix the internet's problems. The stakes here are unusually high and it is important that we get this right.

We look forward to working with you on these important matters in the future.

Sincerely,



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