

Shareholder to Address Censorship Policies at Alphabet, Amazon, and Meta



Proposals by National Legal and Policy Center Seek Transparency About Government Requests to Take Down Content

NEWS RELEASE BY NATIONAL LEGAL & POLICY CENTER

Falls Church, VA | May 22, 2023 10:00 AM Eastern Daylight Time

Following the exposure by the “Twitter Files” reports that revealed the extent to which malicious government agencies colluded with Big Tech to censor content, a shareholder in three Silicon Valley corporations will present proposals in the coming weeks to address their suppression of speech.

National Legal and Policy Center – which owns stock in Amazon, Alphabet (parent of Google and YouTube) and Meta (parent of Facebook) – will sponsor proposals at each company that request transparency about requests they have received from U.S. government officials to “take down” content from their platforms. Amazon’s annual meeting is on Wednesday, May 24; Meta’s is on May 31, and Alphabet’s is on June 2.

“As we’ve learned since Elon Musk took over Twitter, there is an epidemic of unconstitutional government censorship of speech in our country, and Big Tech has welcomed the opportunities to be their enforcers,” said Paul Chesser, director of NLPC’s Corporate Integrity Project, who will present the proposals at the companies’ respective meetings. “It is vital, as *public* companies, that Alphabet, Amazon and Meta act in the country’s interest and disclose *who* in the federal government is making these improper – and most of them probably illegal – requests, and divulge what they have asked to be removed from their platforms.”

The **Amazon** and **Meta** proposals seek an itemization of the requests the companies have received from federal government. The **Alphabet proposal** asks for a report about the extent its censorship policies and practices have on the fiduciary health of the company.

The text of NLPC’s proposal for a “Risk Audit on Content Censorship” for Alphabet’s 2023 annual meeting follows:

RESOLVED:

Shareholders request that Alphabet Inc. (“Company”) issue a report at reasonable cost – omitting proprietary or legally privileged information – reviewing the vulnerabilities of its enforcement of Google’s and YouTube’s Terms of Service related to content policies, and

assessing the risks posed by content management controversies related to issues such as election interference, freedom of expression, and inequitable application of policies, and how they affect the Company's finances, operations, and reputation.

SUPPORTING STATEMENT:

Evidence has accumulated over many years that show Alphabet Inc.'s platforms discriminate against disfavored speech, interfered in elections, and is undeniably prejudiced. Major examples include:

- In leaked Company emails, employees discussed using "ephemeral experiences" to change users' views. Back in 2016, the Company's chief financial officer said, "we will use the great strength and resources and reach we have" to advance Google's values. Consequentially, senior research psychologist Dr. Robert Epstein found that – based on 1.5 million search experiences his team aggregated in 2020 – that the Company's manipulations could have shifted up to six million votes to Joe Biden.
- A study of voter outreach by 2020 political candidates, conducted by North Carolina State University's Department of Computer Science, found that Google's Gmail "marked 59.3% more emails from [conservative] candidates as spam compared to the [progressive] candidates."
- The Republican National Committee claimed that Gmail sent more than 22 million of its emails to spam during a critical fundraising period in the 2022 election cycle. The Company has incurred a lawsuit and a complaint to the Federal Elections Commission due to the alleged suppression.
- A Media Research Center analysis of the most tightly contested 2022 U.S. Senate races found that ten of 12 Republican candidates' campaign websites (83%) appeared far lower (or did not appear at all) on page one of Google's organic search results, compared to their Senate Democratic Party opponents' campaign websites.

In addition to the above examples, the Company is the target of a credible, major lawsuit by the states of Missouri and Louisiana, based on extensive evidence that the Company violated users' First Amendment rights.

Shareholders need to know whether the Company is engaged in unconstitutional censorship, and whether the Company exercises its content moderation in violation of its Terms of Service, opening the Company to liability claims by victims. Shareholders also need to know whether the Company is failing to disclose these potential liabilities as material risks in its public filings. There is currently no single source providing shareholders the information sought by this resolution.

Founded in 1991, NLPC promotes ethics in public life and government accountability through research, investigation, education, and legal action.

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For more information or to schedule an interview with Paul Chesser, contact Dan Rene at 202-329-8357 or drene@nlpc.org.

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