

White House to convene social media summit after new Trump attacks



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The White House said on Wednesday that it will hold a social media summit next month amid President Trump's fresh attacks against internet platforms over allegations of anti-conservative bias.

White House spokesman Judd Deere told The Hill in an email that the event is set for July 11.

"This event will bring together digital leaders for a robust conversation on the opportunities and challenges of today's online environment," Deere said.

It's unclear which leaders will be invited or who plans on attending.

Trump earlier Wednesday attacked Facebook, Google, and Twitter, accusing them, without evidence, of opposing him politically and even trying to rig the election against him, the latest escalation in his fight with the tech giants.

"These people are all Democrats," the president said in an interview with Fox Business.

"We should be suing Google and Facebook and all that, which perhaps we will," he added.

Trump also accused Twitter of censorship.

"I have millions and millions of followers, but I will tell you they make it very hard for people to join me on Twitter and they make it very much harder for me to get out the message," he said.

Facebook and Google declined to comment. A spokesman for Twitter pointed to a

blog post that the company put out last year saying that some users could expect follower counts to drop as it purges fake accounts from the platform.

“We’ll be removing these locked accounts from follower counts across profiles globally,” the post said. “As a result, the number of followers displayed on many profiles may go down.”

The companies have all denied that politics played any role in their decisionmaking when it comes to content moderation. None of the platforms’ representatives would comment on the social media summit.

Trump has met with tech executives in recent months, including Google CEO Sundar Pichai and Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey, to complain about what he suspects are efforts from a socially liberal Silicon Valley to silence conservatives.

During the April meeting with Dorsey, Trump reportedly raised the issue of losing followers. Dorsey was forced to explain that the lost followers were likely bots.

Other GOP lawmakers have echoed the attacks and used them to push for changes to a law that shields websites from liability for content posted by their users, Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act.

Conservative lawmakers have in recent days used a video posted this week by the right-wing group Project Veritas as ammunition. The segment includes an undercover video of Jen Gennai, a Google executive, talking about mistakes the company made in 2016 that it is trying to avoid in 2020.

Project Veritas painted the recording as evidence of liberal bias, but Gennai responded saying that the group “selectively edited and spliced the video to distort my words and the actions of my employer.”

“I was having a casual chat with someone at a restaurant and used some imprecise language. Project Veritas got me. Well done,” Gennai wrote in a blog post.

Still, GOP leaders seized on the video, and its removal from the Google-owned YouTube due to a privacy claim, as evidence of a conspiracy against conservatives.

“Advocating violent acts and recruiting terrorists online is illegal. But expressing

one's political views, however repugnant they may be, is protected under the First Amendment," Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.), the top Republican on the House Homeland Security Committee, said on Wednesday during the panel's hearing with social media executives.

"I have serious questions about Google's ability to be fair and balanced when it appears to have colluded with YouTube to silence this negative press coverage," Rogers added.

And in a testy exchange during a Senate Commerce subcommittee hearing on Wednesday, Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) repeatedly asked a Google executive if she knows anyone at the company who voted for Trump.

Democrats, who are also becoming increasingly critical of the tech giants, have dismissed the bias allegations from conservatives as bad-faith attacks. At Wednesday's Commerce hearing, Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii), a vocal tech critic himself, called it "working of the refs."

"There are members of Congress who use the working of the refs to terrify Facebook and Google and Twitter executives so that they don't take action in taking down extreme content, false content, polarizing content — contra their own rules of engagement," he said.

Source:

<https://thehill.com/policy/technology/450418-trump-to-convene-social-media-summit-in-july>

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