

Zuckerberg says Biden administration pressured Meta to censor COVID-19 content

Aug 27 (Reuters) - Meta Platforms (META.O), opens new tab CEO Mark Zuckerberg said the Biden administration had pressured the company to “censor” COVID-19 content during the pandemic, apparently referring to White House requests to take down misinformation about the coronavirus and vaccines.

In a letter dated Aug. 26, Zuckerberg told the U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee that he regretted not speaking up about this pressure earlier, as well as other decisions he had made as the owner of Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp around removing certain content.

In July 2021, President Joe Biden, a Democrat, said social media platforms like Facebook “are killing people” for allowing misinformation about coronavirus vaccines to be posted on its platform.

Others like former White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki and Surgeon General Vivek Murthy publicly said the company was not doing enough to take down misinformation, and was making it harder to fight the pandemic and save lives.

Facebook said at the time it was taking “aggressive steps” to fight such misinformation. The Biden administration ultimately eased up on its criticism, even as vaccine lies continued to spread on social media.

In the letter to the Republican-controlled House Judiciary Committee on Monday, Zuckerberg said his company was “pressured” into “censoring” content and that the company would push back if it faced such demands again.

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