

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

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On September 23, 2025, attorneys for Alphabet, YouTube’s parent company, sent this Committee a letter containing a “statement of facts” that reads like a coerced confession. The letter—regarding YouTube’s content guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic—appears to give Committee Republicans exactly what they have sought for the past three years: an admission that the Biden Administration “pressed the Company regarding certain user-generated content.”¹ Yet this belated confession is impossible to square with the detailed testimony of 20 Alphabet employees, who all explained, under penalty of 18 U.S.C. § 1001 for False Statements to Congress, that the Biden Administration never sought to force YouTube to remove content. What changed? What was Alphabet promised or threatened with in order to dance to this new MAGA tune?

Over the last three years, Committee Republicans have conducted a sprawling investigation in a desperate attempt to prove its claim that the Biden Administration coerced YouTube into censoring certain content on its platform. Committee Republicans interviewed 20 Alphabet employees of all seniority levels from departments across the company.² As thousands of pages of transcripts of testimony make clear, not *a single one* of Alphabet’s employees testified about any coercion or undue pressure from the Biden Administration. A few examples of your own employees’ testimony may be instructive for you to appreciate how far afield Alphabet’s recent letter falls from the established facts of the investigation.

For example, on June 10, 2025, YouTube’s Vice President of Product Management, a position responsible for ensuring YouTube has the right technical and product structures to uphold its community guidelines, testified before the Committee. The following exchange occurred during their testimony:

Q: [D]o you ever recall hearing about a government official pressuring you or someone on your team to do your job in a specific way?

¹ Letter from Daniel F. Donovan, Counsel for Alphabet, to the Hon. Jim Jordan, Chairman, Comm. on the Judiciary (Sept. 23, 2025), <https://judiciary.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/republicans-judiciary.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/2025-09-23-letter-to-hjc.pdf>.

² *Id.*

A: No.³

A second employee, also a YouTube Vice President of Product Management, corroborated that conclusion in an interview on June 25, 2025. The following exchange occurred during their testimony regarding a YouTube guide to handling harmful, misleading, and deceptive content:

Q: Does YouTube develop these guides independently?

A: In general, our—my team does work. We gather input from various folks, but the work that we do is independent of I'd say outside influence.⁴

The second Vice President could not identify a single instance of U.S. Government coercion in the development of YouTube's COVID-19 policies. The following exchange occurred during their testimony:

Q: Based upon what you might remember from this time, are you aware of any U.S. Government official trying to coerce you or anyone at YouTube into developing specific COVID 19 policies?

A: Not to my recollection.

Q: Are you aware of any U.S. Government official during this time trying to coerce you or anyone at YouTube into reducing certain types of content related to COVID 19?

A: Not that I can recall.

Q: Are you aware of any U.S. Government official ever threatening you or YouTube with adverse actions if you refused to take a particular action related to COVID 19?

A: Not that I can recall.

Q: Are you aware of any U.S. Government official ever asking YouTube employees to reduce any content based on the political or ideological viewpoint of the video's content?

A: Nothing that I can recall.⁵

³ Transcribed Interview of YouTube's Vice President of Product Management, H. Judiciary Comm. (Jun. 10, 2025), at 44 (on file with the Comm.).

⁴ Transcribed Interview of YouTube's Vice President of Product Management, H. Judiciary Comm. (Jun. 25, 2025), at 83 (on file with the Comm.).

⁵ *Id.* at 85-86.

A third employee, a senior executive that works in YouTube's Trust and Safety unit, which is charged with defining and enforcing YouTube's policies for what is and is not allowed on its platform, testified on June 12, 2025. The following exchange occurred during their testimony regarding YouTube's COVID-19 vaccine content policy:

Q: Do you recall, in the latter parts of 2021, YouTube making this change to the policy because they were pressured by the Biden administration?

A: No. Sorry, I'm—I have no recollection of us, my team, the company, making a change to that policy due to pressure from the Biden administration.⁶

A fourth employee, who worked in Health Partnerships for YouTube, a department responsible for working with health organizations and governments to bring authoritative health information to YouTube, testified on June 16, 2023. The following exchange occurred during their testimony:

Q: And at any point when you were doing these collaborations with government agencies, was the government agency coercing YouTube in any way to participate in those relationships?

A: No.

Q: Would you say it was voluntary on the part of YouTube and the government?

A: Yes. This was our approach across the world was to help health authorities get the information out there.

Q: And that's because YouTube on its own has identified that mission as something that's important to the corporate mission of Google and YouTube?

A: Yes, that's a top priority.⁷

A fifth employee, who was a YouTube Public Health executive who oversees YouTube's partnerships with public health organizations and the federal government's health agencies, testified on May 20, 2025. The following exchange occurred during their testimony regarding their interactions with White House staff:

⁶ Transcribed Interview of a YouTube senior executive in Trust & Safety, H. Judiciary Comm. (Jun. 12, 2025), at 106-107 (on file with the Comm.).

⁷ Transcribed Interview of a YouTube employee in Health Partnerships, H. Judiciary Comm. (Jun. 16, 2023), at 32 (on file with the Comm.).

Q: In general, I guess, in your interactions with the Biden administration, do you recall anyone from the administration trying to coerce you or change the way you approached your job at YouTube?

A: No, I don't recall that.

Q: Do you recall feeling pressured under the type -- under the Biden administration, do you recall feeling pressured to change the types of health information that YouTube might have raised?

A: No, I don't remember that.

Q: Did you ever feel, under the Biden administration, compelled to change the way that you thought about authoritative health information?

A: No.⁸

In fact, testimony from YouTube employees reveals that, to the extent there was *any* relationship between the White House and YouTube surrounding the enforcement of standards for harmful videos in the pandemic, it would have been the first Trump Administration that initiated such relationship. The following exchange occurred during the same YouTube Public Health executive's testimony:

Q: In October of 2020, who was President of the United States?

A: Donald Trump.

Q: And this article says that by October of 2020, YouTube had removed approximately 200,000 videos from the platform. Did you see that reference?

A: I did.

Q: In your experience, if you recall, does that sound about right?

A: Yeah, I think that's roughly about right.

Q: And it says that YouTube had been engaging in this effort since early February of 2020. Is that also what the article says?

A: Yes. Yes, it does say that.

Q: And who was President in early February of 2020? President of the United States?

⁸ Transcribed Interview of a YouTube executive in Public Health, H. Judiciary Comm. (May 20, 2025), at 106 (on file with the Comm.).

A: Donald Trump.⁹

A sixth YouTube employee, who is a Senior Manager of Government Affairs & Public Policy, testified on June 6, 2024. The following exchange occurred during their testimony:

Q: And does this slide refresh your memory about when YouTube updated its COVID-19 misinformation policy to include certain content-related containing claims related to a COVID-19 vaccine?

A: Yes, that would have been October of 2020 then.

Q: Okay. And that was when Donald Trump was President of the United States, correct?

A: Yes.¹⁰

Are you now asserting that all of these witnesses lied to or misled the Committee? Is it more likely that all of these 20 witnesses got together to plan and provide false testimony or that you wrote an unsworn letter contradicting all of them to placate President Trump and his servants?

Within days of sending your letter to the Committee, YouTube also agreed to settle a nearly five-year-old lawsuit brought by Donald Trump for \$24.5 million, including \$22 million to his vanity ballroom.¹¹ Like Disney, Meta, and Paramount,¹² you suddenly found merit in Donald Trump's claim that YouTube somehow violated his rights by removing his account for violating its terms of usage after he repeatedly used your platform to falsely claim the 2020 election was stolen—a lie debunked by more than 80 federal and state judges in over 60 lawsuits—and to incite violence at the Capitol.¹³

⁹ *Id.* at 99-100.

¹⁰ Transcribed Interview of a YouTube Senior Manager of Government Affairs & Public Policy, H. Judiciary Comm. (Jun. 6, 2024), at 41 (on file with the Comm.).

¹¹ Kate Conger, *YouTube Settles Trump Lawsuit Over Account Suspension for \$24.5 Million*, N.Y. TIMES (Sept. 29, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/29/technology/youtube-trump-lawsuit-settlement.html>.

¹² David Folkenflik, *ABC Settles with Trump for \$15 Million. Now, He Wants to Sue Other News Outlets*, NPR (Dec. 16, 2024), <https://www.npr.org/2024/12/16/nx-s1-5230274/abc-settles-with-trump-for-15-million-now-he-wants-to-sue-other-news-outlets>; Bobby Allyn, *Meta Agrees to Pay Trump \$25 Million to Settle Lawsuit over Facebook and Instagram Suspensions*, NPR (Jan. 29, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/01/29/nx-s1-5279570/meta-trump-settlement-facebook-instagram-suspensions>; David Folkenflik, *CBS Is the Latest News Giant to Bend to Trump's Power*, NPR (Jul. 2, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/07/02/nx-s1-5454790/cbs-settlement-trump-60-minutes-harris-interview-analysis>.

¹³ Rosalind S. Helderman & Elise Viebeck, *'The Last Wall': How Dozens of Judges Across the Political Spectrum Rejected Trump's Efforts to Overturn the Election*, WASH. POST (Dec. 12, 2020), https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/judges-trump-election-lawsuits/2020/12/12/e3a57224-3a72-11eb-98c4-25dc9f4987e8_story.html; Select Comm. to Investigate the Jan. 6th Attack on the U.S. Capitol, *Final Report*, H. Rep. No. 117-663, at 210 (2022), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-J6-REPORT/pdf/GPO-J6-REPORT.pdf>.

Alphabet is far from the only example of this Administration using carrots and sticks to ensure that a powerful institution falls in line. In a few short months, President Trump has wielded his power to coerce numerous law firms, universities, and television networks to kowtow to him and do his bidding. For example, President Trump cajoled major law firms into reversing internal policies he disagrees with and providing nearly a billion dollars' worth of *pro bono* legal services for causes he hand-picked.¹⁴ President Trump bullied Columbia University to cough up over \$200 million in order to get its students and faculty the federal research funding they were previously awarded.¹⁵ And President Trump got Paramount to pay him tens of millions of dollars, install a right-wing minder, and put its most popular news channel under the control of a politically conservative commentator in order to curb his ire over a single broadcast and approve their pending merger.¹⁶ Now it appears we can add YouTube, one of the most popular platforms for video sharing in the world, and Alphabet, one of the richest companies in the world with a market capitalization of \$3 trillion, to the list of appeasing supplicants.¹⁷

Given all this, the primary questions on my mind are: **what did the Administration promise your company, and what did it threaten you with?** To answer these and other pressing questions, and pursuant to the Judiciary Committee's broad jurisdiction over constitutional issues, including the First Amendment, please provide the following to the Committee no later than 5:00 p.m., November 13, 2025.

1. Any testimony provided by YouTube or Alphabet employees to the Committee you believe to be misleading or false;
2. All communications between YouTube, its personnel, or affiliates, and any third parties regarding the September 23, 2025, letter, including any benefits promised to YouTube or Alphabet for sending the letter, or adverse consequences for YouTube or Alphabet if it fails to send the letter;
3. All documents relating to the settlement of Donald Trump's lawsuit against YouTube, including but not limited to all settlement documents and pre-settlement negotiation documents;
4. All communications between YouTube, its personnel or affiliates and the Trump Administration, including any Executive Branch offices and personnel including John P. Coale, including but not limited to the following subjects: YouTube's content moderation policies; YouTube's \$24.5 million settlement with Donald

¹⁴ Sam Baker & Anna Spiegel, *As Big Law Folds to Trump, Some D.C. Firms are Fighting*, AXIOS (Apr. 15, 2025), <https://www.axios.com/local/washington-dc/2025/04/15/big-law-pro-bono-work-trump-dc-firms-fighting>.

¹⁵ Carolyn Thompson, *Columbia University Makes Deal with Trump Administration, Agrees to Pay More than \$220 Million to Restore Federal Funding*, PBS NEWS (Jul. 24, 2025), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/columbia-university-makes-deal-with-trump-administration-agrees-to-pay-more-than-220-million-to-restore-federal-funding>.

¹⁶ Benjamin Mullin, Lauren Hirsch & Michael Grynbaum, *Paramount Buys The Free Press, Ushering in a New Era at CBS News*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 6, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/06/business/media/paramount-bari-weiss-free-press-cbs-news.html>.

¹⁷ Nico Grant & John Koblin, *How YouTube Took Over Our Television Screens*, N.Y. TIMES (Jul. 30, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/30/technology/youtube-streaming-tv.html>.

Trump; adjudications or rulemaking processes; ongoing or potential investigations; or financial; and

5. All internal communications, memoranda, or meeting agenda or notes within YouTube or affiliated businesses regarding the legal settlement with Donald Trump, changes to its content moderation, safety guidelines, or removal policies and standards, to include any and all references to federal government entities, communications from the same, and discussions of political or government influence.

Furthermore, I invite you to sit for a transcribed interview with our Committee—just as your employees have—to testify about YouTube’s content moderation policies, alleged pressure from the Biden Administration, the testimony of 20 other Alphabet employees and how that squares with your September 23, 2025, letter and the company’s recent settlement with Donald Trump. Please contact Democratic Committee staff at (202) 225-3951 no later than November 13, 2025, to arrange for this interview.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Very truly yours,


Jamie Raskin
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Jim Jordan, Chairman