



Written Testimony of Juniper Downs
Director, Public Policy and Government Relations, Google
House Judiciary Committee
Hearing on “Facebook, Google and Twitter: Examining the Content
Filtering Practices of Social Media Giants”
July 17, 2018

I. INTRODUCTION

Chairman Goodlatte, Ranking Member Nadler, and members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Juniper Downs, and I serve as the global policy lead for YouTube.

The Internet has been a force for creativity, learning, and access to information. Products like Google Search and YouTube have expanded economic opportunity for small businesses to market and sell their goods; have given artists, creators, and journalists a platform to share their work, connect with an audience, and enrich civic discourse; and have enabled billions to benefit from a bigger, broader understanding of the world.

Supporting the free flow of ideas is core to our mission to organize and make the world’s information universally accessible and useful. We build tools that empower users to access, create, and share information like never before — giving them more choice, opportunity, and exposure to a diversity of opinions. We build those products for everyone, in the US and around the world. People will value these services only so long as they continue to trust them to work well and provide them with the most relevant and useful information. We have a natural and long-term incentive to make sure that our products work for users of all viewpoints.

We strive to make information from the web available to all our users, but not all speech is protected. We respect the laws of the nearly 200 countries in which we offer services. Once we are on notice of content that may violate local law, we evaluate it and block it for the relevant jurisdiction. For many issues, such as privacy, defamation, or hate speech, our legal obligations may vary country by country as different jurisdictions have

come to different conclusions about how to deal with these complex issues. In the case of all legal removals, we share information about government requests for removal in our [Transparency Report](#).

Where we have developed our own content policies, we enforce them in a politically neutral way. Giving preference to content of one political ideology over another would fundamentally conflict with our goal of providing services that work for everyone.

II. SEARCH

Google Search has come a long way since we started in 1998, but our goal remains the same: to provide users with the most relevant information for their searches from the most authoritative sources. Search reflects the content available on the web — hundreds of billions of web pages — and the web is dynamic with many thousands of pieces of new content posted every minute. For a typical query, there are thousands, even millions, of webpages with potentially relevant information. Search handles trillions of queries each year, and every day 15% of the queries we process are ones we've never seen before. For example, we could not have anticipated queries about the soccer team trapped in caves in Thailand, but our systems quickly adapted to return results about the rescue mission. Building a search engine that can serve the most useful results for all these queries is a complex challenge that requires ongoing research, quality testing, and investment.

To give users results that are useful and relevant in a fraction of a second, Google ranking systems sort through the webpages in our Search index. These ranking systems analyze what users are looking for and what information web pages contain. We analyze search queries, rank useful pages, and consider context (such as location and language), to return relevant and useful information.

Sometimes, the correct treatment for a given page is that it shouldn't be ranked at all. When deciding whether to block a page outright from our results, we're strongly guided by the law, relying whenever possible on the decisions of courts. There are some other narrow circumstances in which we may remove links from Search results, including when we identify violations of our [webmaster guidelines](#), which guard against deceptive or manipulative behavior designed to deceive users or game our systems.

Every year we make thousands of improvements to Search to improve the quality of results for the wide range of queries Google sees every day. In 2017, we ran over 270,000 experiments, with trained external Search Quality Evaluators and live user tests, resulting in more than 2400 improvements to Search. Our ranking and

algorithmic improvements have one purpose only: improving our Search results for our users.

We put all possible changes through rigorous user testing and evaluation. We work with external Search Quality Evaluators from a range of backgrounds and geographies to measure the quality of search results on an ongoing basis. These Evaluators assess how well a website gives searchers what they're looking for and rate the quality of results based on the expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness of the content. These ratings help us benchmark the quality of our results and make sure these meet a high bar for users of Google Search all around the world. To ensure a consistent approach, we publish [Search Quality Evaluator Guidelines](#) to give these Evaluators guidance and examples for appropriate ratings. We make these guidelines publicly available on our [How Search Works](#) website.

III. YOUTUBE

YouTube's mission is to give everyone a voice and show them the world. It has democratized how stories — and whose stories — get told. We work to provide a place where people can listen, share, build community, and be successful. To put our work in context, it's important to recognize the scale of our services. More than one and a half billion people come to YouTube every month. We see well over 450 hours of video uploaded every *minute*. Most of this content is positive — ranging from how-to videos, family vloggers, and funny pet videos, to educational and cultural content and more. In fact, learning and educational content drives over a billion views on YouTube every single day. Many creators are able to make a living using the platform. YouTube channels making over six figures in revenue are up 40 percent over the last year. And digital platforms like YouTube have long been a place for breaking news, exposing injustices, and sharing content from previously inaccessible places.

We are dedicated to access to information and freedom of expression, but it's not anything goes on YouTube. We've developed robust [Community Guidelines](#) to provide clear guidance about what is not allowed on YouTube. For example, we do not allow pornography, incitement to violence, or harassment. We work hard to maintain an environment that benefits creators, advertisers, and viewers alike. Keeping YouTube free from dangerous, illegal, or illicit content not only protects our users, it's a business imperative.

In addition, we may impose certain restrictions on content, including disabling advertising on videos that don't comply with our [Advertiser Friendly Guidelines](#), and

age-restricting content that may not be appropriate for all audiences. We also provide user controls, like [Restricted Mode](#), an optional setting for users who want to filter out more mature content. Of course videos that are unavailable in Restricted Mode or are not monetized through advertising remain available on the site.

Our policies do not target particular political beliefs. To determine when videos should be removed, demonetized, or age restricted, we look at the context, including whether content is clearly documentary, educational, or satirical. As an example, videos that discuss or depict mature subjects including death and tragedy, highly sexualized content, violence, or excessive profanity, are likely to be unavailable in Restricted Mode.

We don't always get it right, and sometimes our system de-monetizes content when it should not. We hear these concerns from creators of all stripes — from gamers, to various underrepresented communities, to both liberals and conservatives. Accordingly, we have a robust [process for appeal](#) of both demonetization and removal decisions. We encourage our users to take advantage of this process if they feel we have treated content in a way that is inconsistent with our policies. We also work hard to keep creators [informed](#) around changes to the platform, particularly around monetization and our advertiser-friendly [guidelines](#). We engage in open and frequent communication with our creators through partner managers, blog posts, product forums, social accounts, and email notifications.

As I mentioned at the start, we build our products for all of our users from all political stripes around the globe. The long term success of our business is directly related to our ability to earn and maintain the trust of our users. We will continue to pursue that trust by encouraging and acting on feedback about ways we can improve.

Thank you for the opportunity to outline our efforts in this space. I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.