

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

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October 15, 2020

Mr. Jack Dorsey
Chief Executive Officer
Twitter, Inc.
355 Market Street, Suite 100
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Mr. Dorsey:

Yesterday the *New York Post* published an article discussing alleged emails showing Hunter Biden may have introduced his father, then-Vice President Joe Biden, to an executive from Burisma, a Ukrainian energy firm which was paying Hunter Biden tens of thousands of dollars per month. If true, this narrative raises questions about whether Joe Biden lied to the American public about using his position as Vice President to help his son's Ukrainian business dealings.

Shortly after its publication the article began to circulate and be retweeted on Twitter. Such activities are not uncommon when breaking news occurs. Yesterday, however, Twitter responded very differently than it had in past instances where important stories had been published by major media outlets. Despite yesterday's article being placed in the fourth-largest newspaper in the United States,¹ Twitter unilaterally decided to mark the story as "potentially unsafe" and blocked it. Twitter also "temporarily locked White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany's account, as well as the *New York Post*'s, adding notices to their tweets saying they violated Twitter's rules on prohibiting publishing hacked materials."² After the *New York Post* article was blocked, Twitter then suppressed an official press release from the Republicans on the House Judiciary Committee that reposted the article and blocked users from tweeting the link.³

Though you later acknowledged blocking the article without context was "unacceptable" and the company's communications surrounding its actions was "not great,"⁴ Twitter tamped down circulation of the article and limited its ability to be shared with the American people. In doing so, Twitter benefitted one candidate for President at the expense of the other.

¹ *Top 10 Daily Newspapers*, CISION, Jan. 4, 2019, available at <https://www.cision.com/us/2019/01/top-ten-us-daily-newspapers/>.

² Elizabeth Dwoskin, *Facebook and Twitter take unusual steps to limit spread of New York Post story*, WASH. POST, Oct. 15, 2020, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2020/10/15/facebook-twitter-hunter-biden/>.

³ Tyler Olson, *House GOP reposts Hunter Biden story in press release, gets censored by Twitter*, FOXBUSINESS, Oct. 15, 2020, available at <https://www.foxbusiness.com/politics/twitter-censors-house-gop-press-release-after-lawmakers-post-hunter-biden-story-in-full>

⁴ Tweet by Jack Dorsey, @jack, 7:55 P.M., Oct. 14, 2020, available at <https://twitter.com/jack/status/1316528193621327876>.

Such Orwellian tactics are the opposite of how Twitter has responded during other major news cycles over the past several years. Recently, the *New York Times* published a series of articles regarding President Trump's taxes. Despite the suspect legality of the *Times* obtaining the tax records and writing about them, Twitter took no steps to limit dissemination of the article on its platform. During the hearings to confirm Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court in 2018 rumors swirled about on Twitter with suspect veracity—all later to be proven false. Yet Twitter took no steps then, either, to limit dissemination of such rumors on its platform.

Perhaps even more troubling, Brandon Borrman, Twitter's vice president of global communications, claimed Twitter took these steps under its "hacked materials policy," without providing any evidence the materials were the result of a hacking. Borrman even claimed Twitter had "blocked links before under the policy, but did not specify when."⁵

Therefore, please provide a list of all links Twitter has blocked on its platform from January 1, 2019 to the present. In addition, please provide answers to the following questions:

- 1) What, if any, steps did Twitter take to verify the accuracy of yesterday's *New York Post* article before blocking its URL and locking certain accounts?
- 2) What evidence, if any, does Twitter have that the emails mentioned in yesterday's *New York Post* article were hacked?
- 3) What, if any, steps did Twitter take to verify the accuracy of the September-October 2020 *New York Times* articles regarding President Trump's taxes?
- 4) Was there any discussion within Twitter leadership about the *New York Times* article falling under Twitter's rules on prohibiting publishing hacked materials?
- 5) What, if any, steps did Twitter take to verify the accuracy of the myriad rumors surrounding Brett Kavanaugh shared on Twitter in early September 2018?

I look forward to receiving your responses in this matter no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, October 16, 2020.

Sincerely,



James Comer
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman

⁵ Dwoskin, *supra* note 2.