

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051  
MINORITY (202) 225-5074  
<https://oversight.house.gov>

July 23, 2021

The Honorable Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A.  
U.S. Surgeon General  
200 Independence Ave. S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Dr. Murthy:

We are conducting oversight over recent concerning reports that the Biden Administration is actively censoring medical information and opinions on social media. In fact, White House Press Secretary, Jen Psaki, confirmed the story when she said, “[the Biden Administration is] flagging problematic posts for Facebook.”<sup>1</sup> including “members of [White House] senior staff but also members of [the White House] COVID-19 team.”<sup>2</sup> This raises numerous concerning questions, particularly whether or not the White House is affirmatively colluding with Big Tech.

The First Amendment protects all Americans’ right to free speech—speech free from government intervention, free from government intrusion, and most importantly, free from government censorship. The First Amendment is not suspended in times of crisis; in fact, it should be amplified. Unfortunately, in an apparent effort to stifle scientific and medical debate, the Biden Administration is taking affirmative steps to moderate and censor Americans’ speech. This is unconscionable.

On July 15, 2021, you released an Advisory entitled “Confronting Health Misinformation.”<sup>2</sup> This Advisory includes recommendations, from your office, to families, educators, journalists, social media platforms, and others on how you think they can combat misinformation.<sup>3</sup> The recurring themes: censorship and division. **You suggest American families are lying to each other, children should censor their classmates, journalists be the**

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas Ernst, *White House admits de facto moderating Facebook, is ‘flagging problematic posts’*, Wash. Times (July 15, 2020), <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/jul/15/jen-psaki-white-house-moderates-for-facebook-de-fa/>.

<sup>2</sup> Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and Surgeon General Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, July 15, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/press-briefings/2021/07/15/press-briefing-by-press-secretary-jen-psaki-and-surgeon-general-dr-vivek-h-murthy-july-15-2021/>

<sup>2</sup> CONFRONTING HEALTH MISINFORMATION, U.S. SURGEON GENERAL (July 15, 2021), <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-misinformation-advisory.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

**gatekeepers of fact and censor views that do not conform with the latest in elite consensus, and Big Tech be the arbiter of credibility and suppress debate and discussion.**

You conclude with a warning to Big Tech—comply or else. The Advisory states, “[w]e need institutions to recognize that [confronting misinformation] is [social media’s] moral and civic responsibility, too, and they are accountable.”<sup>4</sup> President Joe Biden confirmed this when he said social media was “killing people.”<sup>5</sup> It is clear that the Biden Administration’s goal is to actively censor the American people. This is particularly concerning considering Big Tech’s collusion with the science community to suppress the theory COVID-19 originated in the Wuhan Institute of Virology—a theory the Biden Administration recently admitted is likely.<sup>6</sup>

To assist in our oversight of this matter, we request the following documents and information as soon as possible but no later than August 6, 2021:

1. All underlying communications and documents relating to the Surgeon General Advisory entitled “Confronting Health Misinformation.”
2. All communications from the Office of the Surgeon General:
  - a. Facebook, Inc., or any of its subsidiaries;
  - b. Twitter, Inc., or any of its subsidiaries;
  - c. Alphabet, Inc., or any of its subsidiaries;
  - d. Tik Tok, Inc., or any of its subsidiaries;
  - e. Reddit, Inc., or any of its subsidiaries;
  - f. Snap, Inc., or any of its subsidiaries.
3. Any written agreements or contracts regarding “Confronting Health Misinformation” between the Office of the Surgeon General and any of the companies listed in (2).

In addition to these documents, please provide a full and complete briefing on these topics as soon as possible but not later than July 30, 2021. To schedule the briefing or ask any follow-up or related questions, please contact Committee on Oversight and Reform staff at (202) 225-5074.

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<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> Lauren Egan, ‘They’re killing people’: Biden blames Facebook, other social media for allowing Covid misinformation, NBC NEWS (July 16, 2021), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/they-re-killing-people-biden-blames-facebook-other-social-media-n1274232>.

<sup>6</sup> Natasha Bertrand, et. al., Senior Biden officials finding that Covid lab leak theory as credible as natural origins, CNN (July 16, 2021), <https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/16/politics/biden-intel-review-covid-origins/index.html>.

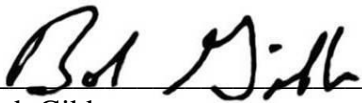
The Honorable Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A.

July 23, 2021

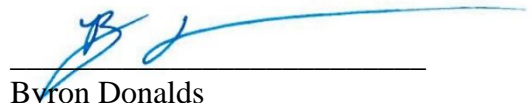
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The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,



Bob Gibbs  
Member of Congress



Byron Donalds  
Member of Congress



James Comer  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Oversight and Reform



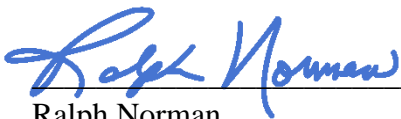
Jody Hice  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Government  
Operations



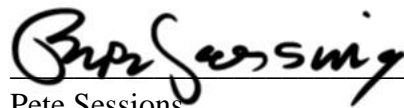
Glenn S. Grothman  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on National Security



Michael Cloud  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Economic and  
Consumer Policy



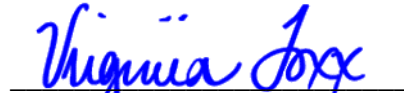
Ralph Norman  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Environment



Pete Sessions  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and  
Civil Liberties



Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.  
Member of Congress



Virginia A. Foxx  
Member of Congress

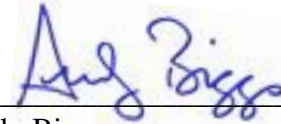
The Honorable Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A.

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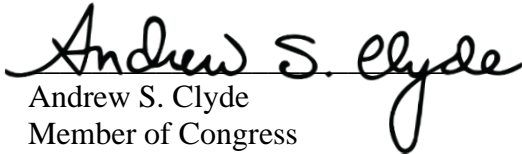
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Fred Keller  
Member of Congress



Andy Biggs  
Member of Congress



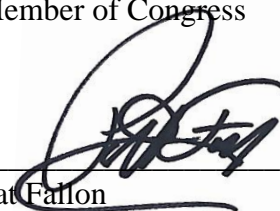
Andrew S. Clyde  
Member of Congress



Nancy Mace  
Member of Congress



Jake LaTurner  
Member of Congress



Pat Fallon  
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman  
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Government Operations

The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch, Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Security

The Honorable Raja Krishnamoorthi, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy

The Honorable Ro Khanna, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Environment

The Honorable Jamie Raskin, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties