

Facebook Now Admits It May Have ‘Inadvertently’ Trampled on Conservatives and Christians

“Suppressing political content or preventing people from seeing what matters most to them is directly contrary to Facebook’s mission and our business objectives.”

In a letter written and delivered to Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee Chairman John Thune (R-S.D.) on Monday, the social media giant’s general counsel, Colin Stretch, said it recently completed its own internal investigation into alleged political bias and censorship. Although the company couldn’t rule out “isolated improper actions or unintentional bias in the implementation” of its guidelines and policies, it found no “systemic political bias.”

Still, Stretch said Facebook has pledged to make a number of changes as part of its “commitment to continually improve” and to “minimize risks where human judgment is involved.” These include:

- “We have already updated terminology in our Guidelines and conducted refresher training for all reviewers that emphasized that content decisions may not be made on the basis of politics or ideology.”
- “We will institute additional controls and oversight around the review team, including robust escalation procedures.”
- “We will expand our Help Center content related to the Trending Topics feature to provide additional information about this feature.”

- “We will eliminate our reliance on external websites and news outlets to identify, validate or assess the importance of trending topics. This means that we will discontinue use of the top-10 list of news outlets, the Media 1K list and the RSS feed.”

Stretch said these “improvements and safeguards” are meant to ensure that Facebook “remains a platform that is open and welcoming to all groups and individuals,” and to restore any lost trust.

In the process of refuting several of the bias allegations, the attorney did note that news about the first day of this year’s Conservative Political Action Conference had not been “accepted” by Facebook’s reviewers. He said the investigation concluded the decision was likely the result of the fact the Super Tuesday presidential primary contests had been held the night before.

Matt Schlapp, chairman of the American Conservative Union, which hosts the annual political conference, wasn’t happy with Facebook’s explanation. He said, in an official statement released Monday evening, that he hoped Thune would continue his investigation.

“This issue is still unresolved even after these admissions of wrongdoing by Facebook,” he said. “We will continue to press this matter until we are satisfied that conservatives will be fairly treated.

“Facebook has admitted to harming CPAC, but they have not called us to apologize, and they have failed to explain what they did. This two-week long investigation (it’s amazing how fast an *internal* investigation can be conducted) seems to scratch the surface. Sen. Thune has done the right thing to press them and we urge Congress to vigorously scrutinize Facebook to prevent deceptive practices and false advertising in the future.”