

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 27, 2020

Monika Bickert
Head of Global Policy Management
Facebook
1 Hacker Way
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear Ms. Bickert,

We are writing to inquire about troubling reports that Facebook is allowing paid political ads to spread disinformation to voters in North Carolina ahead of the November election. This is an especially critical and sensitive time for our democracy, and we hope you can provide us with more information about these ads and how you plan to immediately address this problem.

Specifically, we have received information from the nonpartisan research and advocacy group Avaaz that highlights a sample of ads from two Super PACs: “America First Action” and “Stop Republicans PAC.” Each organization has run dozens of ads around the country in battleground states. It appears some of these ads were targeted specifically to voters in North Carolina:

- As of October 7th, at least 13 ads from America First Action gathered an estimated 441,000 impressions in North Carolina. One ad included a video that contains a selectively edited clip of Kamala Harris, in which it appears like she is condoning violent riots. A more recent ad includes video that selectively edits Joe Biden’s comments about raising taxes, despite Facebook having already removed other ads which contain this clip. Both claims were debunked by fact checkers from [USA Today](#) and [PolitiFact](#), but as of October 7th, these two ads were still active.
- Avaaz’s initial analysis also found that Facebook allowed the Stop Republicans PAC to run at least 30 ads, which began running on July 30th and were still active as of September 23rd, with the misleading claim that the U.S. Postal Service “will be G-O-N-E by the end of the year” unless Congress immediately delivers billions of dollars in aid. These claims were [debunked](#) in April by a third-party fact checker. None of these ads, which earned around 1.3 million impressions nationwide, have since been removed, and it appears Facebook has allowed 18 similar ads to run on its platform.

Despite being notified of these and other misleading ads from both liberal and conservative leaning groups, Facebook has reportedly failed to remove many of these flagged ads and even allowed the same Super PACs to post *new* ads, despite their record of false or misleading claims.

As you know, Facebook’s own policy “prohibits ads that include claims debunked by third-party fact checkers or, in certain circumstances, claims debunked by organizations with particular expertise.” This policy also includes the warning that repeat violators may have their ability to advertise on the Facebook platform revoked in the future.

Accordingly, we request your responses to the following queries as soon as possible:

1. Please provide a list of all political ads that Facebook or your fact checking partners have identified as false, misleading, or that otherwise violate Facebook policies that have reached users in North Carolina, including the sponsoring organization, a brief description of the content, the number of impressions, and the cost of the ads.
2. Facebook [policy](#) “prohibits ads that include claims debunked by third-party fact checkers.” Can you confirm that Facebook has taken down all political ads in North Carolina containing false and misleading information debunked by your fact checking partners? If not, why not?
3. The same [policy](#) notes that “advertisers that repeatedly post information deemed to be false may have restrictions placed on their ability to advertise on Facebook.” How does Facebook make determinations about these repeat violators and their ability to further utilize your platform? Can you confirm that Facebook has restricted all repeat violators of your policies from placing any more ads until after the election? Further, will Facebook investigate all advertisers that have run misleading ads? If not, why not?
4. Your fact checking partners create posts on Facebook when they debunk misinformation found on your site, including paid political ads. Does Facebook plan to distribute corrections from Facebook’s fact checkers to the newsfeed of users who were exposed to false and misleading political ads? If not, why not?
5. Will Facebook commit to fact checking every political ad *before* it goes live between now and the time the results of the election are confirmed? If not, how do you intend to protect voters from paid political disinformation?

Facebook’s platform is a major source of information for many of our constituents. We have a shared interest to ensure that North Carolina voters are not being unduly influenced by deceptive information that is proliferating from organizations with political agendas. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter, and we look forward to working with you to protect the integrity of our democratic process.

Sincerely,



DAVID E. PRICE
Member of Congress



G. K. BUTTERFIELD
Member of Congress



ALMA S. ADAMS, Ph. D.
Member of Congress