

United States Senate

November 24, 2020

Susan Wojcicki
Chief Executive Office
YouTube, LLC.
901 Cherry Avenue
San Bruno, California 94066

Dear Ms. Wojcicki:

We write to express our deep concern regarding the proliferation of misinformation on your platform during and immediately following the 2020 elections and in light of the upcoming Georgia run-off elections. We urge you to immediately remove all election outcome misinformation and take aggressive steps to implement prohibitions, as other social media companies have done, regarding outcomes in future elections.

In August 2020 when YouTube updated its policy regarding misinformation and manipulated media, the platform notably refused to prohibit users from posting false content on the outcome of the election or the manner in which state and local officials counted votes.¹ As a result, the platform is now home to an “onslaught of videos aiming to undermine the legitimacy of the election.”² For example, one YouTube video claiming evidence of voter fraud in Michigan has more than five million views,³ despite any evidence of such fraud.⁴ These videos seek to undermine our democracy and cast doubt on the legitimacy of President-elect Biden’s incoming administration. Moreover, because the current president has not committed to a peaceful transition of power, misinformation and manipulated media content on your platform may fuel civil unrest.

As you know, on January 5, 2021, Georgia voters will cast their ballots in two runoff elections for Georgia’s U.S. Senate seats. The outcome of these races will determine what party controls the U.S. Senate; and for that reason, the races are expected to garner significant national interest.⁵ YouTube and its industry peers must take responsibility and immediately stop the spread of misinformation and manipulated media on their platforms.

We respectfully request responses to the following questions by December 8, 2020.

¹ <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2801973?>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/10/technology/election-misinformation-continues-staying-up-on-youtube.html>

² <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-11-10/youtube-election-loophole-lets-some-false-trump-win-videos-spread>

³ *Id.*

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/10/us/politics/voting-fraud.html>

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/07/us/politics/georgia-senate-runoff-explainer.html>

- 1) Will YouTube commit to removing content containing false or misleading information as to the outcome of the 2020 elections and the upcoming elections in Georgia? If not, why?
- 2) What steps has YouTube implemented since announcing its prohibition on voter suppression content?
- 3) What steps will YouTube take to ensure that the platform is free from content that suppresses voting, incites violence, or makes false claims concerning the casting of ballots surrounding the January 2021 Georgia run-off elections?
- 4) Please provide our offices with any YouTube research concerning the platform's amplification of groups or organizations using YouTube to spread election misinformation.
- 5) How much in ad revenue did YouTube receive from videos showing election result misinformation?

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

/s/ Robert Menendez
Robert Menendez
United States Senator

/s/ Mazie K. Hirono
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

/s/ Gary C. Peters
Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

/s/ Amy Klobuchar
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator