

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 31, 2024

Mr. Sundar Pichai
Chief Executive Officer
Google LLC
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway
Mountainview, CA 94043

Mr. Pichai—

Google’s failure to provide suggestions related to the assassination attempt against President Trump on July 13, 2024 as part of its search function is yet another example of censorship against conservative voices and violates the intent of Section 230.¹ Omitting suggestions to the most obvious and recent victim of an assassination attempt shows a willful discrimination against President Trump and users of your search engine. Furthermore, Google’s decision to selectively erect hurdles to those seeking to obtain more information regarding one of the most important events in recent American history places you in the role of information arbiter, well beyond the scope of your firm’s purported purpose. Regrettably, I am not surprised by this glaring omission given Google’s demonstrated history of manipulating results and discrimination against conservative ideology.²

Google advertises itself as a search engine and aggregator, not a censor. If Google wishes to become a publishing firm or editor, Congress could then regulate accordingly by removing the sacred Section 230 protections your firm has long used to silence conservative voices.

Over the weekend, Google claimed that “no manual action” was taken to effectuate these results.³ However, this clarification is woefully inadequate, disingenuous, and misleading. If the autocomplete function is truly reflective of the recent searches completed on Google, the self-learning algorithms should have easily adjusted their autocomplete function during a massive increase in search queries over the last two weeks.

Google employees have previously raised concerns that the internal unspoken company standard is to play “whatever political side of the fence” that the country is on.⁴ Furthermore, some of my Republican colleagues have raised concerns regarding recommendation system algorithms under the umbrella of Alphabet and the bias of content they provide to operators seeking information.

¹ Congress expressly provided legal immunity to internet firms on the grounds that they would not remove content unless it is “obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy, excessively violent, harassing, or otherwise objectionable, whether or not such material is constitutionally protected.” 47 USC 230(c)(2)(A).

² David Shepardson, “Facebook, Google accused of anti-conservative bias at U.S. Senate hearing.” Reuters, April 11, 2019. Cf. Joy Pullman, “How to Stop Using Google Search on Your Computer and Phone,” January 25, 2021. <https://thefederalist.com/2021/01/25/how-to-stop-using-google-search-on-your-computer-and-phone/>.

³ Google Communications (@google_comms), “There was no manual action taken. Our systems have protections against Autocomplete predictions associated with political violence,” X.com, July 28th, 2024, 3:35 PM ET

⁴ Lanum, Nikolas. “Does Google Want People to Be ‘Woke’? Former Employee Reveals Company Response to Trump, Biden and BLM.” Fox Business, March 21, 2024. <https://www.foxbusiness.com/media/google-want-people-woke-former-employee-reveals-company-response-trump-biden-blm>.

Given your firm's repeated behavior, my colleagues and I will be initiating an investigation into Google's censorship, bias, and constricting the free flow of information. Furthermore, as a member of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee (HSGAC), I will do everything in my power to encourage fellow Committee members to force Google to testify under oath regarding these practices.

I ask that you provide the answers to the following questions no later than Friday, August 9th, 2024.

1. Why did Google's search suggestion function create automated entries for "assassination attempt on President Truman" but not "assassination attempt on President Trump"?
2. Who oversees the algorithmic search function at Google?
3. Can you discuss why you believe hiding violent search results is better for the public discourse than offering up-to-date information?
4. What decisions were made at Google in the aftermath of the July 13th assassination attempt in regards to searches for the July 13th attack on President Trump?
5. Please provide any written correspondence between employees at Google regarding updating the search function in response to the July 13th attack
6. If autocomplete systems have protections against "political violence" why does the system make suggestions after querying the words "political violence"?
7. What are some other global instances in which Google took the same precautions as they have with the events of July 13th?
8. What is Google's timeline for making the attempted assassination of Donald Trump a search Topic, similar to that of the attempted assassination of Harry Truman, on Google?

I look forward to your response,



Roger Marshall, M.D.
U.S. Senator

cc:

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