

Trump threatens to close social media platforms after Twitter puts fact-check warnings on his tweets

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President Trump threatened Wednesday to close down social media platforms after Twitter placed a fact-check warning on two of his tweets from Tuesday, which made wild and unsubstantiated claims about mail-in ballots.

The president jumbled a series of topics together in a two-part tweet at 7:11 a.m. on Wednesday. In the first part he wrote, “Republicans feel that Social Media Platforms totally silence conservatives [sic] voices. We will strongly regulate, or close them down, before we can ever allow this to happen. We saw what they attempted to do, and failed, in 2016. We can’t let a more sophisticated version of that...”

The second part read, “.... happen again. Just like we can’t let large scale Mail-In Ballots take root in our Country. It would be a free for all on cheating, forgery and the theft of Ballots. Whoever cheated the most would win. Likewise, Social Media. Clean up your act, NOW!!!!”

The Wednesday morning tweet was a continuation of the president’s complaint against Twitter the previous evening, when he wrote, “.@Twitter is now interfering in the 2020 Presidential Election. They are saying my statement on Mail-In Ballots, which will lead to massive corruption and fraud, is incorrect, based on fact-checking by Fake News CNN and the Amazon *Washington Post*... Twitter is completely stifling FREE SPEECH, and I, as President, will not allow it to happen!”

Twitter flagged the president’s two Tuesday morning tweets with a hyperlink label that says, “! Get the facts about mail-in ballots.” When clicked, the link opens up a page on Twitter that provides a summary of the false facts about mail-in ballots in the president’s assertions,

along with quotes from and links to multiple news responses from CNN, the *Hill* and the *Washington Post* on the topic.

The summary at the top of the page says, “On Tuesday, President Trump made a series of claims about potential voter fraud after California Governor Gavin Newsom announced an effort to expand mail-in voting in California during the COVID-19 pandemic. These claims are unsubstantiated, according to CNN, *Washington Post* and others. Experts say mail-in ballots are very rarely linked to voter fraud.”

President Trump became all the more incensed because Twitter used the responses of media outlets he has repeatedly attacked as “enemies of the people,” resulting in his Wednesday morning rant.

In keeping with his modus operandi, the president’s angry tweets against social media companies were aimed at mobilizing his right-wing base of supporters for a barrage of attacks on individuals. In this case, the targets were Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey as well as a lower-level executive in charge of monitoring election interference and fake accounts with bots by the name of Yoel Roth.

In his own tweets, Roth had previously referred to the president as a “racist tangerine,” compared White House adviser Kellyanne Conway to Joseph Goebbels and referred to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell as a “bag of farts.” By Wednesday, he had become the target of a flame trolling campaign spearheaded by Conway. Speaking of Roth on Fox News Wednesday morning, Conway said, “Somebody in San Francisco, go wake him up and tell him he’s about to get a lot more followers.”

It appears that Trump’s claim that “conservative

voices” are being silenced by social media is part of an ongoing White House initiative reported last week by the *Washington Post*, which noted that the president “is considering establishing a panel to review complaints of anticonservative bias on social media, according to people familiar with the matter.”

The claim is false on its face. While there have been instances where conservative and extreme right-wing individuals and organizations have been subjected to banning, deleted accounts or content removal for violating “community standards” on social media, they have almost always been restored within hours or days and allowed to resume spreading racist, nationalist and neofascist views unhindered.

Trump’s threat to “strongly regulate” social media reveals that the White House has been engaged in discussions with the legislative branch about the imposition of a stiffer regulatory regime over the social media monopolies and possibly the rest of the Silicon Valley tech giants. Trump’s threat to regulate the companies was immediately backed up on Capitol Hill by Republican Senators Marco Rubio (Florida) and Josh Hawley (Missouri).

As reported last week, the US Justice Department and Attorney General William Barr are preparing a lawsuit against Google for alleged anti-trust violations, and also working on legislation that will force consumer mobile device manufacturers such as Apple to build law enforcement back-door access to their data encryption products.

As for the president’s threat to “close them down,” the *Washington Post* wrote that the White House told reporters the president would sign an executive order “pertaining to social media,” but gave no further details. Just exactly how Trump would shut down the social media corporations over alleged political bias is unclear, considering that First Amendment constitutional protections limit any action the chief executive can take against the companies, according to legal experts.

Moreover, given that the combined Wall Street value of the social media monopolies is something on the order of \$1 trillion, Trump’s threat to shut down the platforms is highly problematic from the standpoint of the investment interests of the US corporate elite and financial oligarchy.

Additionally, it was reported on Wednesday that a

Washington DC federal appeals court upheld a lower court ruling rejecting the lawsuit filed by Freedom Watch and right-wing commentator Laura Loom complaining that Twitter, Facebook, Google and Apple conspired to suppress conservative views and violated their speech rights.

As analyzed here on the *World Socialist Web Site*, the president’s campaign against mail-in ballots is linked to the fact that his poll numbers are falling. Trump and his Republican handlers are fearful that the expanded use of mail-in ballots necessitated by the coronavirus pandemic will result in a larger number of voters among workers, minorities and students, substantially reducing his chances of being reelected.

The claims that “voter fraud” is rampant in America is a political hobby horse promoted by those who support right-wing and racist voter registration and voter ID requirements, which effectively disenfranchise working class and poor voters.

The heightened conflict between Trump and Twitter is a manifestation of divisions within the corporate ruling elite in the midst of the health and economic crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. Behind the vitriol and threats—along with the unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud associated with mail-in ballots—is the fear that the US is on the verge of an explosion of social and class conflict.



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