

Donald Trump's social media app launches on iOS

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Truth Social, Donald Trump's new social media platform, was launched late Sunday by becoming available for download on the Apple App Store.

While the app rose to the number one spot among free apps downloaded on iOS, most new users were unable to get on the platform. Some users reported they were placed on a wait list with more 150,000 users and others were prevented from gaining access when the account setup process halted during email verification.

According to *Inside*, the Twitter-like app experienced a partial outage as of 7:15 a.m. on Monday which lasted for more than seven hours. A status page said, "The Truth Social application is online, although user creation is currently rate-limited during our rollout. We will expand capacity over the coming hours to enable more users to join Truth Social."

Through his media company Trump Media & Technology Group (TMTG), the fascistic former president and January 6 coup plotter announced the app on October 20 in a press release from Palm Beach, Florida. The statement said the mission of the media company was to "create a rival to the liberal media consortium and fight back against the 'Big Tech' companies of Silicon Valley, which have used their unilateral power to silence opposing voices in America."

The press release then quoted Trump himself, who said, "I created TRUTH Social and TMTG to stand up to the tyranny of Big Tech. We live in a world where the Taliban has a huge presence on Twitter, yet your favorite American President has been silenced."

Actually, Trump was suspended and then permanently banned from using Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube beginning on January 6, 2021, during his attempt to overturn the result of the 2020 presidential election and remain in

power through a violent mob assault on the US Capitol.

Twitter, which had been Trump's primary method of promoting his right-wing populism, racism and xenophobia prior to the 2016 election and throughout his presidency, blocked his account for twelve hours on January 6 and warned of a permanent suspension for "repeated and severe violations of our Civic Integrity policy." His account was reactivated and, following three more Tweets of further incitement of his supporters, Twitter permanently suspended Trump from the platform on January 8.

In the case of Facebook, Trump was indefinitely suspended from the largest social media platform and its subsidiaries Instagram and Snapchat on January 7, at least until the end of his term in office. A statement from Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said, "The shocking events of the last 24 hours clearly demonstrate that President Donald Trump intends to use his remaining time in office to undermine the peaceful and lawful transition of power to his elected successor."

In June, Facebook extended this ban to two years, saying his actions "merit the highest penalty available under the new enforcement protocols," and the company will reconsider the decision in January 2023. A large Facebook group called "Stop the Steal," associated with Trump's campaign to block the election results from being certified by claiming it had been "stolen," and its hashtags were permanently banned two days after the election on November 3, 2020.

A report in the *New York Times* on Sunday said that start date of Truth Social was being pushed back to March and the app available on the Apple App Store was a "limited test" version. The *Times* also reported that Trump's merger with the blank check company

Digital World Acquisition Corporation (DWAC) that created his TMTG media enterprise was facing a regulatory investigation.

A blank check company is a firm that exists for no other purpose than to make acquisitions. Also referred to as special purpose acquisition companies (SPACs), these businesses sell shares to investors and then go around and find businesses to merge with. In December, the Securities and Exchange Commission requested information about the deal between DWAC and TMTG, the identities of some investors and documents and communications between the two firms. At the time of Trump's announcement of the media business, he claimed it had a cumulative valuation of \$1.7 billion.

Aside from the politics of Trump himself, the individuals whom he has assembled around him in support of the social media initiative shows something of the political forces that are lining up and participating in the ongoing development of a fascist movement in the US.

Former California Republican congressman Devin Nunes, who had been chairman and then ranking Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, resigned from office at the end of 2021 to take a position as chief executive of TMTG and work on Trump's social media platform.

The far-right Republican has called global warming "nonsense," supported Trump's Muslim travel ban and, during the early days of the pandemic in March 2020, told families who were "healthy" to "go out and go to a local restaurant, likely you can get in easy." He also said at that time that the developing public health disaster would be over by Easter 2020. He has repeatedly referred to Democrats as "followers of neo-Marxist, socialist, Maoist or Communist ideals."

Nunes proved his loyalty to Trump by publishing a four-page memo on February 2, 2018, that said the FBI "may have relied on politically motivated or questionable sources" to obtain a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) warrant to surveil Trump adviser Carter Page in the early days of Mueller probe into alleged Russian interference in the 2020 elections.

Another significant figure joining Trump's tech team is billionaire Peter Thiel. The *New York Times* reported on February 7 that Thiel is resigning from the Meta (formerly Facebook) board of directors to focus on

candidates who support Trump's agenda in the midterm elections in November.

The *Times* report, based on comments from an anonymous source, said Thiel views the midterms as "crucial to changing the direction of the country." Another unnamed individual told *Fortune* that Thiel's focus, "will be on supporting Blake Masters, JD Vance and others who support the Trump agenda. He wanted to avoid being a distraction for Facebook."

Thiel, 54, is a German-American venture capitalist and co-founder of PayPal and Palantir, the US intelligence and defense department big data firm. He was the first outside investor in Facebook, and his estimated net worth is approximately \$10 billion. In his business advice book, *Zero to One*, Thiel argues in favor of corporate monopolies and says that monarchies are the most efficient form of government.

A friend of far-right media personality Ann Coulter, he campaigned for Trump in 2016, publicly announced a \$1.25 million campaign donation to his candidacy and was a featured speaker at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland. After Trump won the presidency, Thiel was named to the executive committee of the President-elect's transition team and nominated several of his friends for White House positions.

As of February 14, Thiel had contributed a total of \$20.4 million to 16 different Republican Party candidates running in the 2022 elections. At least two of these candidates for US Senate, Masters in Arizona and Vance in Ohio, have maintained that Trump was defeated among massive election fraud and Masters stated in a campaign ad, "I think Trump won in 2020."



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