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## I. Introduction

Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Hirono, distinguished members of the Committee: thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Karan Bhatia, and I am the Vice President and Global Head of Government Affairs and Public Policy at Google. In this role, I lead Google’s work on public policy matters with policy makers, government officials, and key political stakeholders in the United States and around the world.

Prior to my role at Google, I served in a series of political appointments in the George W. Bush Administration. Earlier in my career, I spent time at the Heritage Foundation and the Claremont Institute; and in college, I was editor of the campus conservative publication, the Princeton Tory. I am a first generation American. My parents imparted to me an abiding passion for the principles of free speech, democracy, and free markets that make this country the “shining city on the Hill.” This same passion makes me enormously gratified to work at Google — a company that embodies these values every day around the world.

Google is a proud American company, growing across the US. Indeed, as announced earlier this year, we are investing more than \$13 billion to expand our presence in 14 states, creating thousands of American jobs. For the second straight year, we will be expanding faster outside our home state of California than in it. We are also a global company and a big American exporter, competing vigorously with global competitors around the world. Through our [Grow With Google](#) program, we are proud to work with hundreds of thousands of small and medium size businesses, enabling them to tap into the commercial opportunity of the Internet — companies like [ShearShare](#) in Texas, [Big Island Candies](#) in Hawaii, and [MedHaul](#) in Tennessee.

We are a company focused on the future, investing billions of dollars annually in research and development and innovating new products to help people live better lives — for example, by applying artificial intelligence to anonymized health data to enable earlier detection of cancer, or to weather data to better assess risks of natural disaster. Above all, we are a company of more than 100,000 people — people with a wide range of views, nationalities, and backgrounds — dedicated to the company’s mission of organizing the world’s information and making it universally accessible and useful.

We live in an amazing time for speech and the flow of ideas. Never before in the history of mankind has it been possible for so many people to share so many ideas with so many others,

at so low a cost, and through so many different avenues. What makes that possible is having search engines like Google Search and content sharing platforms like YouTube. Internet platforms have been transformative and powerful tools for the marketplace of ideas. Compared to the pre-internet age, the number of information sources we have access to, the variety of viewpoints presented, and the quantity of information made available is astounding. Today, Google Search indexes hundreds of billions of webpages while YouTube has over 500 hours of video content uploaded every minute.

Among the many beneficiaries of the Internet have been political groups. From the Tea Party movement in the United States to the Arab Spring in the Middle East, the internet has enabled people to spread political messages and build political communities, both locally and around the world. Providing a platform for the sharing of, and access to, a broad range of information is core to our mission. It is also core to our business model: Google and YouTube need to be useful for *everyone*, regardless of race, nationality, gender, religion, or political leanings. We therefore have a strong *business* incentive to prevent anyone from interfering with the integrity of our products or the results we provide to our users.

So let me be clear: Google is not politically biased. Indeed, we go to extraordinary lengths to build our products and enforce our policies in an analytically objective, apolitical way. We do so because we want to create tools that are useful to all Americans. Our search engine and our platforms reflect the online world that is out there. At any particular moment, in response to any particular search, some of that information may be unsatisfying to one group or another. Our job — which we take very seriously — is to deliver to users the most relevant and authoritative information out there. And studies have shown that we do just that.

## II. STUDIES

In preparation for this hearing, and to better inform the members of the committee, our data scientists analyzed daily click-through rates on Search results pages that included links to the official websites of Members of Congress. The data showed no difference in these metrics based on whether the Member was a Republican or a Democrat. We also analyzed official YouTube channels for all Senators who have them. We found a consistent, reasonable balance between Republicans and Democrats no matter how we looked at the data. A breakdown of our findings are below.

**Senate YouTube Channels - Total Video Views**

	Democrats	Republicans
<b>Top 10 Senate YouTube Channels</b>	4	6
<b>Top 20 Senate YouTube Channels</b>	9	11
<b>Top 50 Senate YouTube Channels</b>	25	25

**Senate YouTube Channels with ≥1M Video Views**

	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
<b>Senate YouTube Channels</b>	6	7

**Senate YouTube Channels - Rank Based on Views per Video**

	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
<b>Top 10 Senate YouTube Channels</b>	6	4
<b>Top 20 Senate YouTube Channels</b>	11	9

**Senate YouTube Channels - Rank Based on Views per Subscriber**

	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>
<b>Top 10 Senate YouTube Channels</b>	5	5
<b>Top 20 Senate YouTube Channels</b>	10	10

When looking at total video views, we see that of the top 10 Senate channels, four are Democrats and six are Republicans. Of the top 20, nine are Democrats and eleven are Republicans. Of the top 50, 25 are Republicans, and 25 are Democrats. Of the 13 Senate channels with more than 1 million video views, six are Democrats and seven are Republicans. We also looked at views per video. There, we see the top 10 Senate channels are six Democrats and four Republicans. Of the top 20, eleven are Democrats and nine are Republicans. With respect to views per subscriber, the top 10 Senate channels are five Democrats and five Republicans. Of the top 20, ten are Democrats and ten are Republicans.

Independently, *The Economist* magazine recently ran its own experiment to test for “favoritism” by comparing news sites’ actual proportion of search results in the News tab of Google Search with a statistical prediction of the proportion of search results based on a site’s output, reach, and accuracy.<sup>1</sup> First, they built a model, based on our explanation of Google Search’s ranking methodology, of what politically unbiased results might look like. Then, they searched for 31 terms for each day in 2018, yielding 175,000 links to news sources. Finally, they compared the model to Google’s results over the course of their testing in 2018. They found that Google performed in keeping with their model and showed no evidence of political bias.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2019/06/08/google-rewards-reputable-reporting-not-left-wing-politics>

To give a better sense of how we ensure that our products deliver relevant and useful information to our users, I will briefly explain Google’s approach to organizing information in Google Search, how we connect users to content on YouTube, and how we ensure our products serve users of all viewpoints and remain politically neutral.

### III. SEARCH

On Google Search, we aim to provide all users with relevant and useful results based on the text of their queries. Search handles billions of queries a day, and 15% of queries we see each day we’ve never seen before — not to mention that the web itself is constantly changing. Building a search engine that serves the most relevant and useful results for all queries is a complex challenge that requires ongoing research, quality testing, and investment. We are constantly innovating to meet this challenge better. Our Knowledge Graph, which enables you to search for things, people, or places — for example, landmarks, celebrities, cities, or works of art — and instantly get information that’s relevant to your query, is an example of a step toward addressing that complex challenge and building the next generation of search.

We work with external Search Quality Raters — individuals from locations throughout the United States and around the world — to assess the quality of search results. All proposed changes to our Search algorithm undergo rigorous user testing and evaluation by these raters. Our raters use our published [Search Quality Rater Guidelines](#) to inform these assessments. These Guidelines define the goals of our ranking systems, including establishing the criteria that should be used to assess the expertise, authority and trustworthiness of pages; these criteria do not call for the assessment of political ideology. The ratings provided by our Search Quality Raters help us benchmark the quality of our results so that we can meet a high bar for users of Google Search all around the world.

In addition to the Search quality tests, we conduct live traffic experiments to see how real people interact with a feature, before launching it to everyone. Results from these experiments undergo a review by experienced engineers and search analysts, as well as other legal and privacy experts, who then determine whether the change is approved to launch. In 2018, we ran over 650,000 experiments, with trained external Search Quality Raters and live tests, resulting in more than 3,200 improvements to Search.

We remove content from our Search results only in very limited circumstances. In doing so we are guided by the rule of law and rely whenever possible on court orders. There are other [narrow circumstances](#) in which we may remove links from organic listings, including when we identify violations of our [webmaster guidelines](#) — for example, creating pages with malicious behavior such as installing viruses.

While we need to prevent bad actors from gaming our systems through manipulation, spam, fraud, or other forms of abuse, we understand that transparency is crucial to maintaining user trust. In addition to publishing our Search Quality Rater Guidelines, we provide information

about Search on our [How Search Works](#) site. We also publish an annual [Transparency Report](#), sharing data on how government actions and policies affect privacy, security, and access to information online. These reports also detail some of the security threats we detect and the warnings we show to users. We continue to add data and reports to put information into the hands of our users, including our new [Transparency Report: Political Advertising on Google](#). We welcome suggestions for new data or reports to add through a [public transparency portal](#).

#### IV. YOUTUBE

Whereas Google Search aims to index the web, YouTube hosts content. YouTube strives to provide a platform where people can listen, share, build communities, and be successful. Digital platforms like YouTube have become an important way for users to access breaking news and share content from previously inaccessible places. And many YouTubers are able to make a living using the platform. The number of YouTube channels generating more than \$100,000 in revenue is up 40 percent over the last year.

To put our work in context, approximately 2 billion people visit YouTube every month. As I mentioned earlier, we see more than 500 hours of video uploaded every minute. Because of this scale, we increasingly rely on algorithms to screen videos for compliance with our Community Guidelines and to suggest videos that our users might want to see. As with Search, the system is carefully designed to ensure that our employees' personal political views are not a factor in our review or recommendation processes. None of our systems are designed to filter out individuals or groups based on political viewpoints.

While we are dedicated to the mission of increasing access to information and freedom of expression on YouTube, we recognize that with that mission comes certain responsibilities, including the responsibility to keep certain kinds of information off the platform. YouTube's [Community Guidelines](#) provide clear rules of the road for what content we do and do not allow. Material that depicts the abuse of children, violent extremist content, or content that encourages acts of violence against individuals or communities because of their race or religion has no place on our hosted platforms. Such content, to my mind, is not conservative or liberal; it is not political speech; it is content that is dangerous to society and to our community of users. We see it as our right and our responsibility to remove it.

Other policies include certain restrictions we may apply to content that is otherwise allowed on the platform. An example is our removal of advertising from videos that don't comply with our [Advertiser Friendly Guidelines](#), which are based on feedback we receive from advertisers on the types of content they choose not to show ads against. Declining to run ads on a video that violates these guidelines is not an act of censorship; it is a business decision and ultimately important for the creator ecosystem.

Over the past few years, we've been investing in the policies, resources, and products needed to live up to our responsibility to protect the YouTube community from harmful content. This

work has focused on four pillars: removing [violative content](#), raising up [authoritative content](#), reducing the spread of [borderline content](#), and [rewarding trusted creators](#). Thanks to these investments, videos that violate our policies are removed faster than ever and users are seeing less borderline content and harmful misinformation. Most recently, in June of this year, we announced important updates to our hate speech policy to include:

- **Supremacism:** We now remove content that alleges the superiority of one group over another on the basis of certain core characteristics as a means to justify violence, discrimination, segregation, or exclusion.
- **Conspiracy Theories Alleging Inferiority:** We now remove content that alleges people are inferior based on certain protected attributes or that promotes conspiracy theories on the basis of protected attributes.
- **Major Violent Events:** We now remove denials that a well-documented violent event occurred. We also remove hate speech toward survivors of major violent events.

We also joined other companies and governments in signing the [Christchurch Call to Action To Eliminate Terrorist and Violent Extremist Content Online](#), the product of constructive conversations among various stakeholders to make progress on a tough societal issue. These policy changes and commitments are not about politics. This is part of our responsible approach to addressing hate and radicalization online.

We also [age-restrict](#) content that may not be appropriate for all audiences. And we have additional user controls such as [Restricted Mode](#), a setting for users who choose to filter out more mature content. Videos that are filtered out for the very small subset of viewers who have chosen to turn on Restricted Mode remain available for other users to view on the site.

Despite all of our efforts to apply our policies consistently each time, sometimes our content moderation systems will make a mistake. We get feedback from users across the spectrum of beliefs on this topic. To address this, we have a clear process for appeal from [demonetization](#) and [removal](#) decisions, and we reverse decisions if we acted in error.

## V. CONCLUSION

As technology continues to play an increasingly essential role in the lives of Americans, we know that users expect the highest degree of integrity of our products and that we must meet those expectations every day. If we don't, our users will go elsewhere. That is why we invest so heavily in these systems and tools that help us surface the content that is most relevant to our users in an analytically objective, politically neutral way.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with an explanation of our systems and policies on this topic. I look forward to answering your questions.