

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 4, 2019

Jack Dorsey
Chief Executive Officer
Twitter, Inc.
1355 Market Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA, 94103

Dear Mr. Dorsey:

We write to express our concerns about Twitter being used to spread disinformation related to the upcoming 2020 Census, and to request information about how your company is guarding against this threat. As you know, during the 2016 presidential campaign, Twitter was used by malicious actors for the purpose of manipulating the American electorate. Any attempt by a nefarious actor, foreign or domestic, to unduly influence our democracy is an affront to our nation and its people. As social media platforms continue to face interference attempts in our elections, these platforms must also be prepared for efforts to undermine our upcoming 2020 Census.

Through our census every ten years, the United States Government determines where to allocate congressional districts and over \$800 billion in annual federal spending. Misinformation campaigns to discourage any American, including targeted demographic groups, from participating in our national count would be an attack on our democracy with potentially far-reaching consequences for decades to come. We believe social media platforms must do more and do better than was done in 2016 to deter and mitigate interference in our upcoming count.

As Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller described in Volume I of his 'Report on Russian Interference In The 2016 Presidential Election'¹, the Internet Research Agency (IRA), an arm of the Russian Government, carried out a concerted propaganda campaign primarily through Facebook and Twitter during the 2016 presidential campaign. In the course of their interference of our national politics, the IRA "made over 80,000 [Facebook] posts before their deactivation ... and these posts reached at least 29 million U.S persons" (p. 26). Further, "IRA-controlled Twitter accounts separately had tens of thousands of followers, including multiple U.S. political figures who retweeted IRA-created content" (p. 15) and they "operated a network of automated Twitter accounts that enabled the IRA to amplify existing content on Twitter" (p. 26). Similar tactics to discourage participation in our national count must be anticipated and moderated without delay.

¹ <https://www.justice.gov/storage/report.pdf>

The Census Bureau is taking this threat seriously by hiring specialists to build local awareness surrounding the census and is seeking to collaborate with social media platforms to prevent a redux of the 2016 presidential election.² Facebook has promised to ban misinformation campaigns surrounding the census and Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg committed to put “people, policies, and technology in place to protect against Census interference” in a census protection plan that Facebook intends to finalize later this year.³ We will follow the enactment of these promised census interference efforts by Facebook carefully.

You stated in testimony before the House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce on September 5, 2018, “abuse, malicious automation, and manipulation detracts from the health of our platform” and that “[w]e are committed to hold ourselves publicly accountable towards progress” (p. 1).⁴ It is vitally important that you follow through on your promise for Twitter to do better. As a platform historically vulnerable to coordinated interference campaigns, Twitter must lay out its plan to combat census disinformation and allocate people and resources to carry it out. Banning false census information and making significant improvements in the moderation of suspected automated bot accounts will help ensure public trust in our 2020 Census. Finally, we appreciate your recent step to prevent the spread of misinformation in paid advertisements on Twitter⁵ and urge you to ensure proper census outreach efforts reach users on your platform.

We request that you share your plan to prevent census interference with policymakers and provide updates on its implementation ahead of the 2020 Census. We appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to your response.

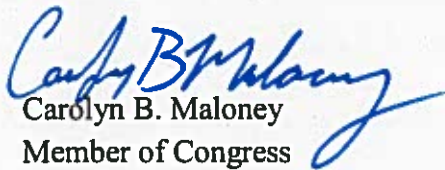
Sincerely,



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress



Tom Malinowski
Member of Congress

² <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/about/about-the-bureau/2019-07-24-dillingham-prepared-statement.pdf>

³ <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2019/06/second-update-civil-rights-audit/>

⁴ <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/IF/IF00/20180905/108642/HHRG-115-IF00-Wstate-DorseyJ-20180905.pdf>

⁵ <https://twitter.com/jack/status/1189634360472829952>



Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



Albio Sires
Member of Congress



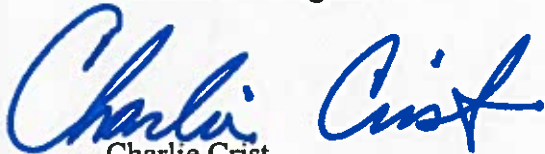
Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress



Charlie Crist
Member of Congress



David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



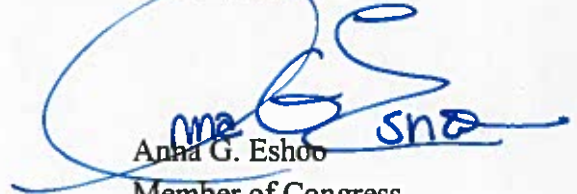
Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



Alma Adams
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



Bill Foster
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Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



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Deb Haaland
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Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress



Donald Norcross
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



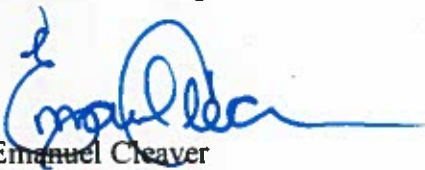
Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver
Member of Congress



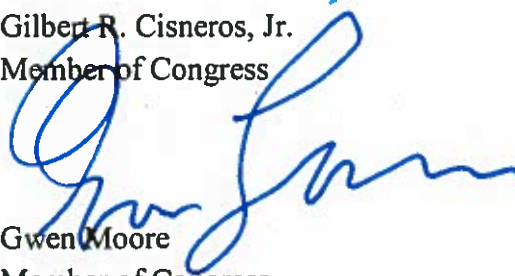
G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress



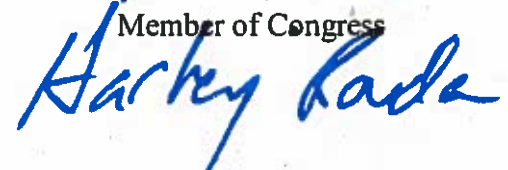
Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress



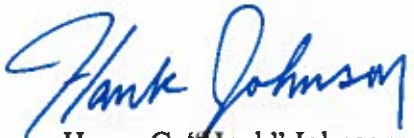
Grace Meng
Member of Congress



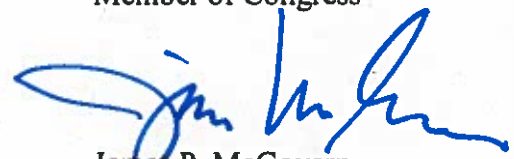
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress




Harley Rouda
Member of Congress



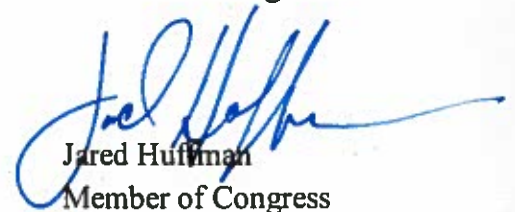
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



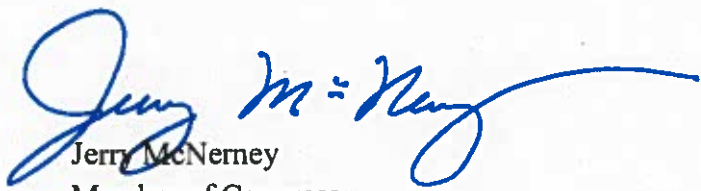
James P. McGovern
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Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress





Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney
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Joseph P. Kennedy, III
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Judy Chu
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Yvette D. Clarke

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Member of Congress

Thomas R. Suozzi

Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

Wm. Lacy Clay

Wm. Lacy Clay
Member of Congress

cc: Mr. Mark Zuckerberg, Chief Executive Officer, Facebook
Mr. Steven T. Dillingham, Director, U.S. Census Bureau