

Zuckerberg targeted by House GOP eager to probe Hunter Biden

September 2 2022, by Billy House



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House Republicans are demanding that Meta Platforms Inc. Chief

Executive Officer Mark Zuckerberg hand over FBI warnings and communications that led Facebook to suppress news about President Joe Biden's son weeks before the 2020 election.

More than 30 Republicans told Zuckerberg in a letter Thursday that it "is highly troubling" that the technology giant limited distribution of a 2020 New York Post article about Hunter Biden, his laptop, "and allegations of Biden family corruption."

Zuckerberg mentioned the incident in an interview last week with podcaster Joe Rogan.

The letter, signed by Representatives Jim Jordan of Ohio, the top Judiciary Committee Republican, James Comer of Kentucky, the top Oversight and Reform Committee Republican, and 33 colleagues provides another indication that the GOP will focus heavily on Hunter Biden if the party gains control of the House—and with it committee subpoena power.

That also presents a risk for U.S. tech companies that are reviled by conservatives who accuse them of limiting the reach of some right-wing users. Republicans are expecting to win the House majority in November's midterm elections, which means GOP-led committees could compel executives to testify in public hearings and demand internal documents beginning next year.

During the 2020 presidential campaign, former President Donald Trump's personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, released materials to some news outlets purportedly from a laptop that Hunter Biden had left at a Wilmington, Delaware, repair shop. Trump's campaign alleged the materials, the origin of which wasn't verified by Bloomberg News, undercut Joe Biden's claims that he and his son never discussed overseas business dealings.

The GOP letter comes as some of Trump's most ardent supporters in Congress have leveled sharp criticism at the FBI, or even called for its funding to be cut, after the search of Trump's Mar-Lago-Estate in Florida as part of an ongoing effort to recover classified documents removed from the White House.

It also follows on the heels of a letter from two Senate Republicans—Chuck Grassley of Iowa and Ron Johnson of Wisconsin—seeking records relating to the FBI's contact with Facebook, Twitter Inc. and other social media companies relating to the Biden family, Hunter Biden's laptop and Russian disinformation around the time of the election.

The House Republicans, who do not currently have any authority to subpoena or otherwise compel Zuckerberg to take any action, instruct him in the letter to preserve all documents, communications, metadata and emails relating to "Facebook's actions to interfere in free and fair election-related public disclosure."

Zuckerberg last week told Rogan that the FBI advised his company before the 2020 election to be vigilant for polarizing Russian propaganda or misinformation content.

In his interview, Zuckerberg didn't say that the FBI specifically pointed to the Post article that alleged Hunter Biden's laptop contained emails that indicated Joe Biden used his influence when he was vice president to help his son's business dealings.

But Zuckerberg said it fit the "pattern" of the FBI's warnings. As a result, Facebook decreased distribution of the news for five or six days, though people could still share it.

"Basically the ranking and news feed was a little bit less, so fewer people

saw it than would have otherwise," Zuckerberg said.

In their letter to Zuckerberg, the Republicans demand all documents since Oct. 1, 2020, between any Facebook employees and the FBI referring or tied to the Post's reporting on the Biden family. In addition, they want any such documentation of Facebook contact with the Biden [presidential campaign](#) or Democratic National Committee regarding the Post's reporting.

The FBI was led then—as it is now—by Christopher Wray, who was appointed by Trump in 2017. Trump and Wray, however, sparred over the agency's inquiries into Russia and other matters.

In their letter, the House Republicans also demand any material on the FBI's more-general warnings to Facebook employees about anticipated 2020 election misinformation, and Facebook's internal responses when warned to be "on high alert" for that.

Republicans have long complained that the technology giants have censored conservative viewpoints, something the companies deny, and they will pursue that theme if they win in November. The Democrats who now control Congress also have the big technology companies in their sights, with Judiciary Chairman Jerrold Nadler considering antitrust legislation.

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Citation: Zuckerberg targeted by House GOP eager to probe Hunter Biden (2022, September 2) retrieved 9 February 2023 from

<https://techxplore.com/news/2022-09-zuckerberg-house-gop-eager-probe.html>

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