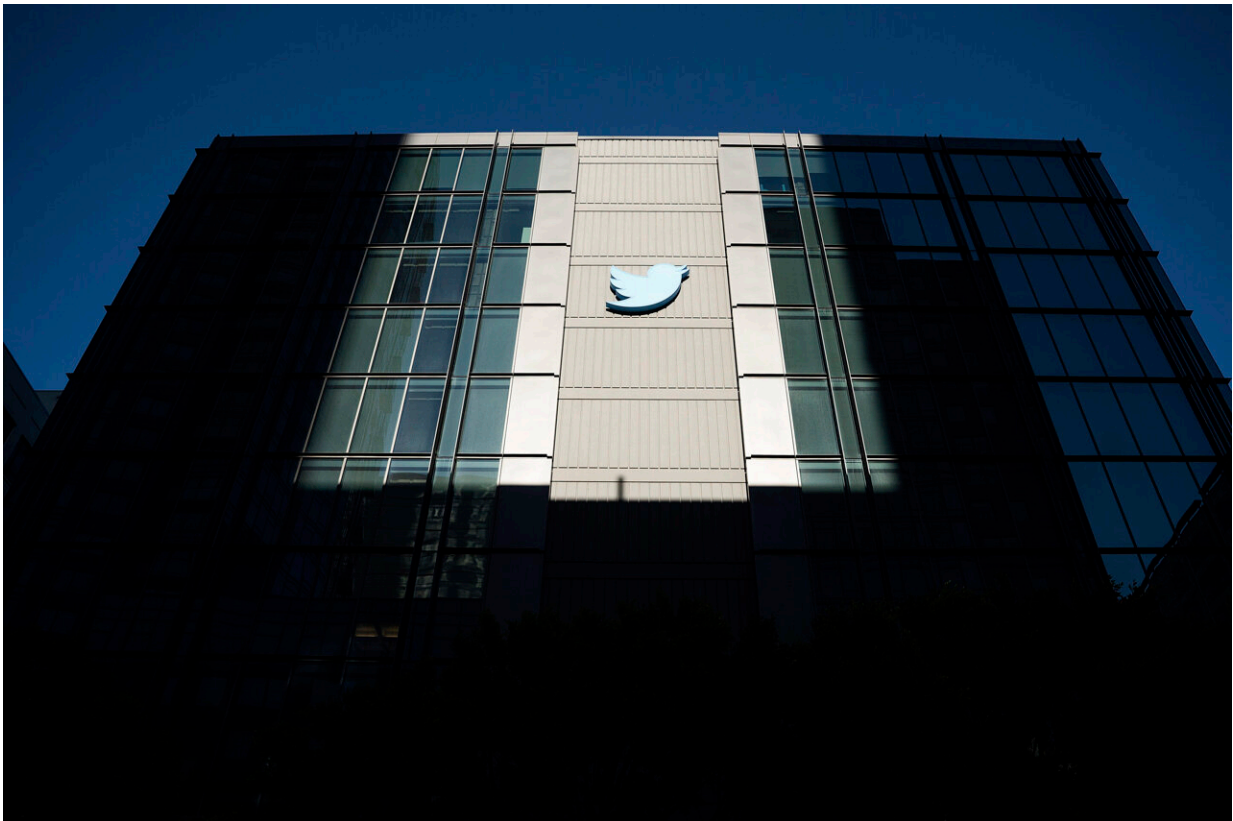


Senators to FTC: Probe Twitter security, take needed action

November 18 2022, by Marcy Gordon



A Twitter logo hangs outside the company's San Francisco offices on Tuesday, Nov. 1, 2022. Reacting to the tumult and mass layoffs at Twitter under its new owner Elon Musk, a group of Democratic senators on Thursday, Nov. 17, 2022, asked federal regulators to investigate any possible violations by the platform of consumer-protection laws or of its data-security commitments. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger, File

Reacting to the tumult and mass layoffs at Twitter under [its new owner Elon Musk](#), a group of Democratic senators on Thursday asked federal regulators to investigate any possible violations by the platform of consumer-protection laws or of its data-security commitments.

The senators also asked Lina Khan, head of the Federal Trade Commission, to take enforcement action if needed against Twitter and [company executives](#) for "any breaches or business practices that are unfair or deceptive."

The FTC said last week it is "tracking recent developments at Twitter with deep concern."

A key focus is the 2011 consent agreement that Twitter signed with the agency, requiring the San Francisco company to address serious data-security lapses. Twitter [paid a \\$150 million penalty in May](#), several months before Musk's takeover, for violating the consent order. An updated version established new procedures requiring the company to implement an enhanced privacy-protection program as well as beefing up [information security](#).

Developments [on the ground at Twitter have been chaotic](#), and experts and Twitter employees are warning of serious security risks flowing from the drastically reduced staff and deepening disorder.

In the latest turn, employees faced a 5 p.m. Eastern deadline Thursday to reply to a Musk email asking them to click "Yes" on a link if they want to be part of the "new Twitter." Those not replying by that time were to receive three months' severance, according to his email.

Musk, who completed the \$44 billion takeover of the company in late October, [fired much of its full-time workforce](#) by email early this month and is expected to [eliminate an untold number of contract jobs](#) for those

responsible for fighting misinformation and other harmful content.

A number of engineers said on Twitter they were fired after saying something critical of Musk, either publicly on Twitter or on an internal messaging board for Twitter employees.

Musk [is fundamentally overhauling the offerings](#) of the influential social platform, and it's not known whether he is telling the FTC about it, as required under the 2011 agreement.

In recent weeks Musk "has taken alarming steps that have undermined the integrity and safety of the platform, and announced new features despite clear warnings those changes would be abused for fraud, scams and dangerous impersonation," the seven Democratic senators, led by Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, said in a letter to Khan.

"Users are already facing the serious repercussions of this growth-at-all-costs strategy," they wrote, noting [recent incidences of fake accounts](#) impersonating President Joe Biden, lawmakers, athletes, companies and others.

"We are concerned that the actions taken by Mr. Musk and others in Twitter management could already represent a violation of the FTC's consent decree, which prohibits misrepresentation and requires that Twitter maintain a comprehensive information-security program," the letter says.

Commenting last week on the developments, the FTC said "No CEO or [company](#) is above the law, and companies must follow our consent decrees. Our revised consent order gives us new tools to ensure compliance, and we are prepared to use them."

The agency would not say whether it is investigating Twitter for potential

violations. If it were, it is empowered to demand documents and depose employees.

FTC officials declined to comment on the senators' request Thursday.

After the FTC's warning came to light last week, Musk said "Twitter will do whatever it takes to adhere to both the letter and spirit of the FTC consent decree."

Also signing the letter to FTC Chair Khan were Democratic Sens. Dianne Feinstein of California, Ben Ray Lujan of New Mexico, Elizabeth Warren and Edward Markey of Massachusetts, Cory Booker of New Jersey and Robert Menendez of New Jersey.

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