

Facebook, Twitter, and Google Testify about Russia meddling

By Jacqueline McGuinness, J.D. Candidate 2017 | November 3, 2017

This week, Facebook, Twitter, and Google [testified](#) before the House and Senate Committees about Russia's interference with the 2016 election. These hearings revealed that an estimated [126](#) million Americans were exposed to content disseminated on Facebook generated by a Russian government-linked Troll Farm. During the hearing, lawmakers asked pressing questions about why it is so easy to spread [misinformation](#) on their platforms and how these companies plan to protect their platforms against use [hostile](#) to U.S. values.

These social media companies and Congress seem to agree that online political ads require greater [oversight](#), though there is disagreement regarding whether internet companies can adequately self-regulate these ads.

For years, the government has given online companies much freedom for [innovation](#) and growth, with little government interference. But the recent Russian investigations have opened the door to increasing congressional [discussions](#) about regulating online advertising.

Republicans and Democrats [complain](#) that it has taken Facebook a year to reveal how many Americans were exposed to Russia-linked content, and that Facebook, Twitter, and Google do not grasp the threat that foreign election [interference](#) poses to U.S. democracy. Accordingly, House and Senate [bills](#) are calling for greater regulation of online political ads. Three senators have introduced a new piece of [legislation](#) called the Honest Ads Act, which would require online social media companies to disclose who is buying political ads on their platforms.

Social media companies have an interest in keeping the government out of their [business](#), and are therefore resistant to invasive regulation. Facebook and Twitter have taken pre-emptive [steps](#) to prove their ability to self-regulate. Facebook revealed its plan to invest more in [safety](#) and security and to require political advertisers to disclose more information about their [campaign](#) and targeted audience.

While social media platforms are critical of government regulation, lawmakers also do not want to hamper innovation. Accordingly, the proposed bills are very [light](#), only targeting political [ads](#).