

From Immigration to Information Filtering: Google Shows Its Pro-Immigration Stance

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In January 2017, the Trump administration shocked the world when it issued an [executive order banning](#) entry for 90 days by nationals of Syria, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Iraq and Yemen. The same order also indefinitely halted the intake of Syrian refugees. In June 2018, the shock wave continued when the [Supreme Court](#) upheld the travel ban in a 5-4 decision. Both the original order and the Supreme Court decision fueled a national debate on immigration.

The conversation on immigration managed to infiltrate the core of companies such as Google. Frustrated with the travel ban, Google's employees tried to find a way to counteract the negative effects of the policy. Internal company emails, obtained by [The Wall Street Journal](#), indicate that Google considered displaying pro-immigration information when people searched for the travel ban. The emails also suggest the use of a search algorithm to provide different results for "prejudicial" search terms.

Both as a citizen and a first-generation immigrant, I could relate to the employees' outrage and desire to act. However, the potential impact of filtering information to promote a political view alarmed me more than the executive order and the decision of the Supreme Court combined. Limiting people's access to information based on a private company's idea of morality would set a dangerous precedent and forever change the way we receive our information. While people might sympathize with Google's motivation in the context of immigration, they might not all agree on other controversial issues such as women's rights, LGBTQ issues, or euthanasia—just to name a few. Additionally, filtering information might have the unintended effect of making people uninformed about the issue at hand. The potential consequences could be catastrophic both in the short term and the long term.

However, Google denies that any such filtering occurred. Google claims that search results have never been altered for political purposes and that the emails were "just a [brainstorm of ideas](#), none of which were ever implemented." According to Google, company policy would never allow the manipulation of search results to promote political ideologies. Nonetheless, the discussions that took place at Google, and technology's ability to implement such discussions, should make all of us very uneasy.



The issue of immigration requires an ongoing national debate and new policies. However, filtering information to combat ignorance creates a very slippery slope and allows corporations to dictate our stances on both moral and political issues—a slope we don't want to find ourselves on as a nation.