

**Hearing Before the United States Senate
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation**

Testimony of Neil Potts
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Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell, Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Neil Potts, and I am a Vice President for Public Policy at Meta. I have been with the company for nearly 10 years, and, in my current role, I'm responsible for oversight of the development and implementation of our Community Standards, which provide the rules for what types of content are and are not allowed on our platforms. I am a graduate of the United States Naval Academy and the University of Virginia School of Law. Prior to joining Meta, I worked as a lawyer in private practice and served as a ground intelligence officer in the United States Marine Corps and was deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

At Meta, our mission is to build the future of human connection and the technology that makes it possible. Key to this work is our foundational commitment to free expression. Every day, millions of Americans use our services to stay in touch with friends and family, generate creative content, learn about what's going on in the world, and more. We want to give them a voice and make sure that they can engage with their communities in a safe way.

The diversity of viewpoints, expression, and experiences on our platforms highlights much of what is best about Meta. But it also presents challenges when deciding what content should and should not be allowed. These are complex issues. To create a place that is safe for a variety of people, we have to make hard decisions about what should be permitted. Some people think we take down too much content, while others think we remove too little. While we know not everyone will agree with every decision that we make, we remain committed to providing transparency to our content moderation and enforcement policies, and we have worked to prioritize speech. Our goal is to always get it right, but we recognize that we are not perfect. And when there are concerns about how we approach our enforcement, we appreciate hearing from people, including you here in Congress, about how we can improve.

In that spirit, I appreciate the opportunity to share Meta's perspective on communications with government officials, which is the focus of the Committee's invitation that I am prepared to address. We regularly hear from governments around the world and others with various concerns around public discourse and public safety. Our job, no matter where content reports may come from, is to ensure that we make independent decisions based on our policies.

As our CEO has acknowledged, in 2021, senior officials from the Biden Administration, including the White House, repeatedly pressured our teams for months to censor certain COVID-19 content, including humor and satire, and expressed a lot of frustration with our teams when we didn't agree. Ultimately, it was our decision whether or not to take content down, and we own our decisions, including changes we made to our COVID-19-related enforcement in the wake of this pressure. We believe the government pressure was wrong and wish we had been more outspoken about it. We should not compromise our content standards due to pressure from any Administration in either direction, and we're ready to push back if something like this happens again.

Our Approach to Content Moderation

We moderate content according to our published policies, including our [Community Standards](#). We enforce these policies in an effort to help keep people on our platforms safe, reduce objectionable content, and help people participate on our platforms responsibly. We strive to be clear and transparent about what our standards are, and we seek to apply them to everyone consistently. When we identify content that violates our policies, we take action.

Over the years, this work led us to develop a set of increasingly complex systems to manage content across our platforms. These efforts were well-intentioned, but they went too far. They expanded over time to the point where we were making too many mistakes, frustrating our users, and too often getting in the way of the free expression we set out to enable.

Recent Changes to Our Content Moderation Program

To address this, we recently implemented a series of significant changes designed to bring us back to our roots and allow for more speech. As we said at the time of their announcement:

- **Ending Our Third-Party Fact-Checking Program and Moving to a Community Notes Model.** When we launched our independent fact-checking program in 2016, we were very clear that we didn't want to be the arbiters of truth. We made what we thought was the best and most reasonable choice at the time, which was to hand that responsibility over to independent fact-checking organizations. The intention of the program was to have these independent experts give people more information about the things they see online, particularly viral hoaxes, so they were able to judge for themselves what they saw and read.

That's not the way things played out, especially in the United States. Experts, like everyone else, have their own biases and perspectives. This showed up in the choices some made about what to fact check and how. Over time we ended up with too much

content being fact checked that people would understand to be legitimate political speech and debate. Our system then attached real consequences in the form of intrusive labels and reduced distribution. A program intended to inform too often became a tool to censor.

So we changed our approach and ended the third-party fact checking program in the United States, moving to a Community Notes program. We've seen this approach work on X—where they empower their community to decide when posts are potentially misleading and need more context, and people across a diverse range of perspectives decide what sort of context is helpful for other users to see. We think this is a better way of achieving our original intention of providing people with information about what they're seeing—and one that's less prone to bias.

Meta does not write Community Notes or decide which ones show up. They are written and rated by contributing users. Community Notes also require agreement between people with a range of perspectives to help prevent biased ratings. We intend to be transparent about how different viewpoints inform the Notes displayed in our apps and are working on the right way to share this information.

We have phased in Community Notes in the U.S. and continue to improve them. We have stopped demoting fact-checked content, and, instead of overlaying full screen interstitial warnings people have to click through before they can even see a post, we now use a much less obtrusive label indicating that there is additional information for those who want to see it.

- **Allowing More Speech.** We found that we were over-enforcing our rules, limiting legitimate political debate, censoring too much trivial content, and subjecting too many people to frustrating enforcement actions. We want to undo the mission creep that has made our rules too restrictive and too prone to over-enforcement. We got rid of a number of restrictions on topics like immigration and gender that are the subject of frequent political discourse and debate.

We also changed how we enforce our policies to reduce the kind of mistakes that account for the vast majority of the censorship on our platforms. We historically used automated systems to scan for all policy violations, but this resulted in too many mistakes and too much content being censored that should not have been. So, we have continued focusing these systems on tackling illegal and high-severity violations, like terrorism, child sexual exploitation, drugs, fraud, and scams. For less severe policy violations, we now rely on someone reporting an issue before we take any action.

We also found we were demoting too much content that our systems predicted might violate our standards. We got rid of most of these demotions and now require greater confidence that the content violates for the rest. Additionally, we tuned our systems to require a much higher degree of confidence before a piece of content is taken down.

People are often given the chance to appeal our enforcement decisions and ask us to take another look, but the process can be frustratingly slow and doesn't always get to the right outcome. We added extra staff to this work and, in more cases, we are also now requiring multiple reviewers to reach a determination in order to take something down. We are working on ways to make recovering accounts more straightforward and testing facial recognition technology, and we've started using AI large language models to provide a second opinion on some content before we take enforcement actions.

- **A Personalized Approach to Political Content.** Since 2021, we have made changes to reduce the amount of civic content people see—posts about elections, politics, or social issues—based on the feedback our users gave us that they wanted to see less of this content. But this was a pretty blunt approach. We started phasing this back into Facebook, Instagram, and Threads with a more personalized approach so that people who want to see more political content in their feeds can.

We are also continually testing how we deliver personalized experiences and have conducted testing around civic content. As a result, we started treating civic content from people and Pages users follow on Facebook more like any other content in their feed, and we started ranking and showing people that content based on explicit signals (for example, liking a piece of content) and implicit signals (like viewing posts) that help us predict what is meaningful to people. We are also recommending more political content based on these personalized signals and are expanding the options people have to control how much of this content they see.

These changes are an attempt to return to our ideals around free expression. That means being vigilant about the impact our policies and systems are having on people's ability to make their voices heard and having the humility to change our approach when we know we're getting things wrong.

We believe these changes are having a positive impact. As reflected in our Community Standards Enforcement Report for the first quarter of 2025, we saw a roughly 50% reduction in enforcement mistakes on our platforms in the United States from the last quarter of 2024 to the first quarter of 2025. During that same time period, the low prevalence of violating content largely remained unchanged for most problem areas. This improvement follows the earlier

commitment we made to change our focus to proactively enforcing high-severity violations and enhancing our accuracy through system audits and additional signals, as described above.

Thank you, and I welcome your questions.