

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Nicole Gill, Executive Director, Accountable Tech
DATE: July 30, 2024 (updated)
RE: As Elon goes all-in for Trump, a reminder that Rs used to *hate* social media bias

Since [officially endorsing](#) Donald Trump for president, Elon Musk has repeatedly elevated pro-Trump misinformation and AI-generated content on X, eagerly added custom icons to pro-Trump hashtags, and possibly limited users from following pro-Harris accounts.

Meanwhile Republicans, who have been staunch objectors of social media bias — going as far as to haul Mark Zuckerberg and other tech execs in front of Congress to answer their unproven claims — are noticeably silent.

X's descent into a far-right communications platform leaves the Internet electorate and public at large with fewer sources of credible and accurate information — an alarming trend of social media platforms fracturing our media environment further, just months away from an election where the future of our democracy is at stake.

Elon Musk himself recently contributed to spreading false information on X by sharing a deepfake of presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris.

- Last week, Musk [posted](#) a parody ad of Vice President Harris that aimed to undermine her legitimacy and qualifications to serve as President of the United States. While the [original post](#) was clear in identifying the content as a parody, Musk's reshare failed to have the same label. The video has been viewed more than 131 million times in 48 hours.
- Musk's actions violate X's own "Synthetic and Manipulated Media Policy," which was last updated in April 2023 and states:

You may not share synthetic, manipulated, or out-of-context media that may deceive or confuse people and lead to harm ("misleading media"). In addition, we may label posts containing misleading media to help people understand their authenticity and to provide additional context.

What is in violation of this policy:

In order for content with misleading media (including images, videos, audios, gifs, and URLs hosting relevant content) to be labeled or removed under this policy, it must:

- *Include media that is significantly and deceptively altered, manipulated, or fabricated, or*
- *Include media that is shared in a deceptive manner or with false context, and*
- *Include media likely to result in widespread confusion on public issues, impact public safety, or cause serious harm*

- When California Governor Gavin Newsom affirmed his own [commitment](#) to outlawing deepfake content of this nature, Musk addressed Newsom's concerns with a dismissive and immature [response](#).

During Trump's first presidential bid, unproven claims of platform censorship became part of the GOP brand.

- In 2020, Trump repeatedly claimed that Twitter, Facebook, and other platforms were trying to "totally silence conservatives." That [false narrative](#) soon became a GOP rallying cry, [dividing the American public](#) and being [echoed](#) by prominent conservative leaders like Rep. Jim Jordan.
- In 2022, after being suspended from Facebook and Twitter for using her accounts to spread misinformation about the COVID-19 vaccine, Rep. Majorie Taylor Greene and her followers [accused](#) the platforms of trying to censor her political views.
- Congressional Republicans have held numerous hearings and [introduced legislation](#) to crack down on what they *claim* is partisan censorship by Big Tech platforms. Last year, Senator Marco Rubio even took a swing at the administration [saying](#), "Since taking office, Biden officials have urged social-media companies to silence conservative viewpoints..."

Musk's [purchase](#) of Twitter — billed as an opportunity to reverse so-called "[anti-conservative bias](#)" — has turned the platform into a far-right hellscape.

- In his first few months of leadership, Musk [froze content moderation](#) tools and [slashed thousands of employees](#) on Twitter's trust and safety teams just days before the 2022 midterm elections. Those moves [increased](#) the number of antisemitic posts by more than 106% and began spoonfeeding other types of racist & incendiary content to users.
- In November of 2022, Musk [invited Trump](#) back onto Twitter after he used the platform to incite the January 6th insurrection. That decision would pave the way for [other far-right users to return to the platform](#), including Andrew Tate and Rep. Majorie Taylor Greene.
- Since endorsing Trump for President in a tweet on July 13th, Musk has repeatedly used his account to elevate absurd pro-Trump content including by amplifying [AI-generated](#) video showing Donald Trump killing President Biden with the caption "Best AI video to date!" that had been viewed 155 million times in nine days, retweeting conspiracy theories from known [QAnon supporters](#) and extreme right-wing [commenters](#), and creating the first-ever partisan [custom emoji](#) in support of Donald Trump.
- During the evening of Sunday, July 21st (the day of President Biden's announcement he would end his run for re-election and his subsequent endorsement of Vice President Kamala Harris) and morning of Monday, July 22nd, reports emerged that Twitter was possibly [preventing](#) users from [following](#) the official account of presumptive Democratic nominee Harris's presidential campaign @KamalaHQ.

As Musk's leadership of X and unprecedented political pandering reveal ideological bias, conservatives who cried for fairness and objectivity are conspicuously silent.

- Conservatives like Marjorie Taylor Greene and Ron DeSantis have made names for themselves pushing claims that the “liberal” leanings of platform leaders made it impossible for them to objectively moderate content. They claimed that social media platforms were censoring Republican voices, even when hearing after hearing, and countless [third-party reviews](#) proved their ridiculous claims were just that.
- With X, Musk has a *demonstrated* history of slashing trust and safety teams and introducing policies that strategically paved the way for far-right propaganda and disinformation to explode on the platform. Now, despite the billionaire's mega-endorsement and [ever-growing list](#) of cozy relationships with folks on the far right, conservatives' concerns of bias and influence seem to have vanished.