

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 23, 2018

Jack Dorsey  
CEO  
Twitter  
1355 Market St., Ste. 900  
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Mr. Dorsey:

We write today to thank you for the actions you took last week to advance honesty, transparency, civil discourse, and democratic debate. After calling on your company last November to notify all users who interacted with false, misleading, and inflammatory advertisements and associated content created by Russian agents during the 2016 elections, we were pleased to read your public statement on January 19th, in which you confirmed your commitment to transparency by notifying 677,775 users who had interacted with nefarious Russian accounts.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, we are dismayed and deeply concerned over continued reports of strategic and targeted Russian disinformation campaigns that jeopardize the safety and democratic processes of the United States through social media.

Over this past weekend, many Twitter users took to your platform to offer different perspectives about the recent government shutdown by using the hashtags #TrumpShutdown and #SchumerShutdown. In our free society, this type of discourse—holding our government accountable—is not only expected but encouraged. But according to the Alliance for Securing Democracy, a bipartisan and transatlantic initiative,<sup>2</sup> this discourse was influenced by Russian propaganda Twitter accounts. In fact, by 10:00 p.m. on Sunday, January 21, 2018, the top trending hashtag promoted by nefarious Russian accounts was #SchumerShutdown.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps even more concerning is the fact that, before #SchumerShutdown, #ReleaseTheMemo was the highest trending hashtag<sup>4</sup> and, as of January 23rd, regained its spot as the top trending hashtag. This hashtag relates to a recent conservative social media effort to have the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence release a classified memo regarding the FBI's alleged abuses of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act to surveil the Trump campaign in an

---

<sup>1</sup> Twitter PublicPolicy, *Update on Twitter's Review of the 2016 U.S. Election*, Twitter (Jan. 19, 2018), [https://blog.twitter.com/official/en\\_us/topics/company/2018/2016-election-update.html](https://blog.twitter.com/official/en_us/topics/company/2018/2016-election-update.html).

<sup>2</sup> Alliance for Securing Democracy, *Our Mission*, The German Marshall Fund of the United States <http://securingdemocracy.gmfus.org> (last visited Jan. 23, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Christina Zhao, *Russian Bots' Top Hashtag is Schumer Shutdown as Government Closure Reaches Day Three*, Newsweek (Jan. 22, 2018), <http://www.newsweek.com/schumersshutdown-top-hashtag-used-russian-government-shutdown-chuck-schumer-786784>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

ongoing investigation regarding Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election.<sup>5</sup> This hashtag has been used as yet another attempt to discredit Special Counsel Robert Mueller's probe. We find it reprehensible that Russian agents have so eagerly manipulated innocent American citizens and undermined our democratic processes through our elections and public policy debates.

As you have already committed to "providing a platform that fosters healthy civic discourse and democratic debate,"<sup>6</sup> we urge you to redouble your efforts at transparency by continuing your efforts to inform all users who have been duped by Russian agents attempting to interfere and influence American public policy debates. Consumer service entities like yours have long understood their duty to inform their users after mistakes are uncovered. You too have an obligation to explain to your users exactly how Russian agents have sought to manipulate our democratic discourse through your platform.

Your recent efforts regarding the disinformation campaigns associated with the 2016 election are certainly commendable. We encourage you to follow up on these efforts by helping Americans to recognize disinformation campaigns that attempt to interfere with this country's ongoing public policy debates. We write to respectfully request that Twitter individually notify any and all users who received or interacted with tweets created or shared by these accounts.

Sincerely,



---

Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



---

Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator

---

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> Twitter PublicPolicy, *supra* note 1.