

RICHARD BLUMENTHAL  
CONNECTICUT

COMMITTEES:

AGING

ARMED SERVICES

COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

JUDICIARY

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

706 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

(202) 224-2823

FAX: (202) 224-9673

90 STATE HOUSE SQUARE, TENTH FLOOR  
HARTFORD, CT 06103

(860) 258-6940

FAX: (860) 258-6958

915 LAFAYETTE BOULEVARD, SUITE 304  
BRIDGEPORT, CT 06604

(203) 330-0598

FAX: (203) 330-0608

<http://blumenthal.senate.gov>

November 9, 2017

Mr. Mark Zuckerberg  
Chairman and CEO  
Facebook  
1 Hacker Way  
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg:

On October 30, 2017, Facebook disclosed that 126 million Americans using Facebook were exposed to false, misleading, and inflammatory posts generated by Russian agents. I write today to respectfully request that Facebook individually notify any and all users who received or interacted with these advertisements and associated content.

Beginning in January 2015 and continuing through August 2017, Russian agents made hundreds of thousands of insidious posts with the intention of distorting our elections, using Facebook and its associated applications that initially reached approximately 29 million people. This material focused on race, religion, gun rights, and LGBT issues. Each posting was specifically designed and targeted to divide and fracture the American people, all at the behest of a hostile foreign government intent on weakening the United States. Their strategy worked. Their divisive and incendiary material was subsequently viewed, liked, shared, or followed by millions more, ultimately reaching 126 million Facebook users by August 2017.

In keeping with Facebook's stated mission, I believe you have a clear ongoing obligation to inform the Facebook community when actors seek to undermine and abuse the website for nefarious purposes. I appreciate that in a letter to investors last week, you wrote, "Protecting our community is more important than maximizing our profits." Now I ask that you begin this reform effort by using Facebook and Instagram's immense communication tools to individually inform its users of what happened from January 2015 to August 2017. In addition, I ask that you commit to individually informing any users who are exposed to illicit content generated by a foreign adversary on Facebook or Instagram moving forward, as standard practice.

Consumer service entities like yours have long understood their duty to inform their users after mistakes are uncovered. Manufacturers of defective products issue recalls; retailers that suffer data breaches notify users whose personal information has been compromised; and newspapers have strict policies for issuing corrections – informing readers what was originally written and how an article has been updated. You too have an obligation to explain to your users exactly how Russian agents sought to manipulate our elections through your platform. These facts are especially important considering the national security implications of this infiltration.

The Russians attacked our democracy – mounting a malign, online offensive to distort our political process and undermine our faith in our elections.

Finally, as you know, trust in your service depends on your transparency and truth-telling. You owe your users full information regarding when, where, and how they may have been unwitting participants in Russia's campaign to sow division and spread disinformation in the United States. Facebook users deserve a comprehensive and confidential view of exactly what content they saw so they can understand and evaluate what they may see in the future.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I respectfully request a response by November 22, 2017.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard Blumenthal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent "R" at the beginning and a long, sweeping tail.

Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senate