

**Testimony of Congressman James A. Himes  
Before House Judiciary Committee  
“Filtering Practices of Social Media Platforms”  
April 26, 2018**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Ranking Member. Thank you for this opportunity.

I came here to Congress almost ten years ago, overwhelmed by the privilege of representing my corner of Connecticut. Even now, I can't quite believe that I get to walk in the footsteps of people like Abraham Lincoln, Sam Rayburn and Shirley Chisholm.

Now I sit in front of the storied Committee on the Judiciary with a simple message. It's a message I worked hard to teach my two daughters:

The truth matters.

This Committee shapes the whole body of American law and balances our cherished liberties with our need for security.

To this Committee, the Truth must matter.

Sadly, today, this Committee meets to promote a dishonest narrative. It meets to continue the hoax, now fully rebutted, that Facebook and other social media companies have mounted a crusade to filter out conservative opinion.

We should talk about Facebook here in this Committee. Over 2 billion people use it. The Kremlin was able to use Facebook to fuel American fault lines and controversies. It has all kinds of personal data on each of us. People get their news from Facebook. That is huge power. And that huge power must be constrained by fairness, care and responsibility. Making sure that happens is where we come in. We should be holding hearing after hearing and using all of our substantial investigative and oversight powers to combat the real threats and dangers of social media, both foreign and domestic.

Instead, today we will continue to amplify the financially lucrative and politically convenient hoax that Facebook is purposefully censoring Diamond and Silk.

Under the theory that the facts do matter, let me spend a minute on them. Diamond and Silk got into a complicated commercial dispute with Facebook about a change in the company's policy on how you can make money on their site. There was a misunderstanding. Facebook mistakenly told them their content had been judged "unsafe". Facebook acknowledged their mistake, apologized and reached out to them by phone, email and Twitter to work this out.

And, most importantly, as the charts behind me show, Diamond and Silk suffered no decline in interactions relative to liberal sites such as Rachel Maddow and Young Turks.

I was in business for many years myself. Assuming that roughly half of Facebook's users lean right, what possible business logic could there be in alienating half your customers? There is none.

Those are the facts. That's the truth.

And the truth matters.

The problem is, this truth is pretty boring. A commercial dispute doesn't fire anybody up. It doesn't play to the carefully manufactured fear of the American right that everyone is out to get them. Never mind that the right controls the White House, both houses of Congress, a growing chunk of the Supreme Court and governorships all over America. Never mind Sinclair. Never mind the global Murdoch news empire. You are under siege.

If there is no siege, there is no fear, and there is no anger. And without fear and anger, well, people may not come to the polls. Without fear and anger, people might ask themselves why we're mortgaging our children's future rather than improving their education. They might wonder why we haven't lifted a finger to shore up Social Security. They might realize that we've done next to nothing to rebuild our ports and highways and railroads.

Can't have that.

I was moved yesterday by President Macron. From where I sat I could look just past him to the portrait of the Marquis de Lafayette. A noble Frenchman challenging our country in front of the French nobleman who helped found our country. Do you remember what the President told us? He said:

"You can play on fear and anger for a time, but they do not build anything."

Eventually, everyone will come to know that the charge that Facebook and other social media companies filter out conservative commentary is untrue. But in the meantime, we will have put one more dent in our democracy.

President Macron said something else yesterday that sticks with me. He said:

"Without truth, there is no real democracy. Because democracy is about true choices and rational decisions. The corruption of information is an attempt to corrode the very spirit of our democracies."

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, let's see past our differences to fight that corruption and corrosion.

The truth matters.

