

# Twitter increase ad transparency to foil politics meddling

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Twitter announced steps to make it easier to identify political ads and who is behind them

Twitter on Tuesday announced steps to make it easier to see who is behind political ads and who they are targeting as social media giants try to thwart skullduggery.

The moves include launching an online center with details about advertisers and their messages, according to general manager of revenue and product engineering Bruce Falck.

Twitter also plans to adopt stricter ad policies and improve controls, amid heightened scrutiny surrounding the news that Russian-backed entities used online platforms to spread disinformation during the 2016 campaign to help Republican Donald Trump defeat Democratic challenger Hillary Clinton.

"To make it clear when you are seeing or engaging with an electioneering ad, we will now require that electioneering advertisers identify their campaigns as such," Falck said in an online post.

"We will also change the look and feel of these ads and include a visual political ad indicator."

## **Honest Ads Act**

US lawmakers last month unveiled legislation to require disclosure of sources of online political ads, a move aimed at preventing a recurrence of Russian entities using [social media](#) to influence the 2016 election.

Senators behind the Honest Ads Act referred to it as an issue of national security.

Democrat Mark Warner, who was among those who introduced the bill, referred to Twitter's move as "a good first step, particularly public disclosure of ads info," in a tweet fired off on Tuesday.

The Honest Ads Act would require online platforms with at least 50 million users to maintain and disclose information on spending of at least \$500 for ads for candidates or legislative issues, applying rules that are similar to those for television and radio.

Lawmakers are investigating how foreign entities used Facebook, Google and other online platforms to sway sentiment in 2016.

Facebook handed to Congress about 3,000 Russia-linked ads that appeared to use hot-button issues to turn people against one another ahead of last year's US election.

## **Dark ads**

Many of these were so-called "dark ads" targeted at specific groups and which could not be viewed by the public.

Falck noted that there is no clear industry definition of issue-based ads that aren't clearly linked to politics but that Twitter is working with peers, policy makers, advertisers and others on a way to quickly and clearly identify such advertising.

Twitter planned to debut the ad policy updates first in the US and then roll them out globally.

Just a few years ago, Facebook and Twitter were hailed as tools for democracy activists, enabling movements like the Arab Spring to flourish.

Today, the tables have turned as fears grow over how social media may have been manipulated to disrupt the US election, and over how authoritarian governments are using the networks to clamp down on dissent.

Facebook and Twitter are among internet companies that have made moves to crack down on their services being used to achieve hidden political agendas with the help of bogus news stories or manipulative ads.

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