

Trump says Google is 'rigged' with bad news about him

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President Donald Trump took aim Tuesday at Google, claiming that news search results were "rigged" against him, which prompted a White House aide to suggest the administration may look at regulating the huge internet platform.

In early morning Twitter comments, the US president complained that searches for "Trump News" brought up negative stories about him, and questioned whether this was illegal.

The attacks follow Trump's unsubstantiated claims repeated last week that US [social media](#) giants were "censoring" conservative voices.

On Google, Trump wrote, "they have it RIGGED, for me & others, so that almost all stories & [news](#) is BAD. Fake CNN is prominent. Republican/Conservative & Fair Media is shut out. Illegal?"

According to Trump, "96% of results on 'Trump News' are from National Left-Wing Media," which he describes as "very dangerous."

Google strongly denied Trump's claims.

"Search is not used to set a political agenda and we don't bias our results toward any political ideology," a Google spokesperson said in an email.

"Every year, we issue hundreds of improvements to our algorithms to ensure they surface high-quality content in response to users' queries.

We continually work to improve Google [search](#) and we never rank [search results](#) to manipulate political sentiment."

The claims appeared to be based on a report from the Trump-friendly news site PJ Media which relied on an analysis chart by conservative news host Sharyl Attkisson that categorized major news outlets such as the New York Times, CBS and CNN as "left wing."

"Google & others are suppressing voices of Conservatives and hiding information and news that is good," Trump said. "They are controlling what we can & cannot see. This is a very serious situation-will be addressed!"

Constitutional issues

Technology and media analysts say there is little evidence to suggest Google is skewing results for political reasons. And if they did, the president would have little recourse under the constitution's free speech protections.

"Accusations of search engine 'bias' have existed as long as there have been search engines. Indeed, search engines are 'biased' in the sense that they privilege some information over others," said Eric Goldman, who heads Santa Clara University's High Tech Law Institute.

Goldman said that any attempt by government to force search engines to display only good news would be a flagrant violation of the Constitution's First Amendment speech guarantees.

"Search engines fully qualify for First Amendment protections for their search results. Numerous cases going back over 15 years have confirmed this," he said.

"Any effort by Trump to 'fix' [search engine results](#) will violate the First Amendment. It's not even a close question."

'Looking into it'

It was not immediately clear what if any measures Trump envisioned, but his top economic adviser Larry Kudlow told reporters at the White House that "we're looking into it" when asked about the claims on Google.

Nuala O'Connor, president of the Washington-based Center for Democracy & Technology, said that while "algorithmic bias" is a legitimate question, there is no evidence of bias and that it would be worrisome if the government tried to step in with regulations.

"It's deeply concerning that any government official would try to bring public pressure on a platform over news and information that is important to our democracy," O'Connor said.

While there is little to suggest that internet firms actively suppress content for political reasons and many conservatives have large online followings, public perception is another matter.

A Pew Research Center survey released in June found 43 percent of Americans think major technology firms support the views of liberals over conservatives, and 72 percent accepted the idea that social media platforms actively censor opposing political views.

Among Republicans and Republican-leaning independents, 85 percent said they think social media sites intentionally censor political viewpoints, Pew found.

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