

Google CEO to meet with US lawmakers after previous snub

September 28 2018, by Michael Liedtke



In this May 8, 2018, file photo, Google CEO Sundar Pichai speaks at the Google I/O conference in Mountain View, Calif. Pichai is scheduled to meet privately with members of Congress Friday, Sept. 28, after he and his boss, Google co-founder Larry Page, stood up lawmakers at a public hearing earlier this month. The closed-door gathering is expected to include discussions about President Donald Trump's recent allegations that Google has been rigging the results of its influential search engine to suppress conservative viewpoints. Google has denied any political bias. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu, File)

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The closed-door gathering is expected to include discussions about President Donald Trump's recent allegations that Google has been rigging the results of its influential search engine to suppress conservative viewpoints. Google has denied any political bias.

Recent reports that Google is poised to re-enter China with a search engine generating censored search results to comply with the demands of that country's Communist government are also expected to be on the agenda. Also potential new regulations that would define how much personal information that internet companies can collect about people using their services.

Both Trump and some U.S. lawmakers also have been raising the possibility of asking government regulators to investigate whether Google has abused its power to thwart competition through its dominant search engine and other widely used services that include Gmail, YouTube, the Chrome web browser and its Android software that runs most of the world's smartphones.

Pichai's meeting with about two dozen Republican lawmakers will be held in the Capitol office of House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, who represents a district in Google's home state of California.

"Google has a lot of questions to answer about reports of bias in its search results, violations of user privacy, anticompetitive behavior, and business dealings with repressive regimes like China," McCarthy said in a statement.

Pichai indicated he also plans to meet with Democrats while in

Washington.

"These meetings will continue Google's long history of engaging with Congress, including testifying seven times to Congress this year," he said.

Google and its corporate parent, Alphabet, may also be trying to mend some political fences after Pichai and Page—now Alphabet's CEO—snubbed Congress a few weeks ago. Neither of them appeared at a high-profile hearing looking into what Twitter, Facebook and Google have been doing to prevent Russia and other foreign governments from using their services to sow discord among U.S. voters in an attempt to sway elections.

Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey testified at the hearing, as did Facebook's No. 2 executive, Sheryl Sandberg, but Google was only willing to send its general counsel. That didn't satisfy lawmakers, who left a vacant chair that they hoped either Pichai or Page would occupy. The no-show prompted Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., to call Google "arrogant."

Friday's meetings will be a prelude to Pichai's anticipated return to Washington in November for a public hearing before the House Judiciary Committee that's scheduled for after the midterm elections.

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