

# Twitter adds warnings to rule-breaking tweets from public figures

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Twitter will place warning labels on tweets that violate its rules but which are allowed to remain due to their importance in public affairs—a policy that could affect President Donald Trump

Twitter announced Thursday it would add warning labels to tweets from

officials and politicians that violate its rules—a move potentially affecting the prodigious output of US President Donald Trump.

The new policy will also "deprioritize" inappropriate comments and enables Twitter to move against errant tweets without removing content important for public debate.

In these cases, users will see a notice about a tweet which violates the rules and must then tap or click through to see the message.

Twitter also will "take steps to make sure the tweet is not algorithmically elevated on our service, to strike the right balance between enabling free expression, fostering accountability, and reducing the potential harm caused by these tweets," according to a statement from the Twitter safety team.

"In the past, we've allowed certain tweets that violated our rules to remain on Twitter because they were in the public's interest, but it wasn't clear when and how we made those determinations," the company said.

Twitter said it expected these cases to be "rare" and that the new policy would only apply to verified accounts, with more than 100,000 followers, of government officials and their representatives or those running for public office, or being considered for a government position. It will not be enforced retroactively.

Twitter has the ability to remove tweets and block users posting inappropriate or abusive comments, but has also insisted on allowing matters "serving the public conversation."

To determine if a tweet violates the rules but must remain visible, Twitter will deploy "a cross-functional team" from its safety, legal and public policy departments to determine "if the tweets are a matter of

public interest."

## 'Step in the right direction'

The move is "a step in the right direction because it lets people know about inflammatory content and then those individuals can decide how seriously they wish to take the message," said Darrell West, head of the Brookings Institution's Center for Technology Innovation.



Trump claims Twitter is censoring him despite his 61 million followers

West added that the move would not necessarily stop policy violations and that "Twitter would have to begin removing content if it wants to

have a meaningful deterrent effect."

Liz Woolery of the Center for Democracy and Technology's free expression project said the Twitter move "seems like a promising compromise."

Woolery said Twitter is reasonable in allowing questionable content from world leaders "because it is newsworthy and because it can be used to hold those people accountable."

But she noted that it is possible the move "could spark greater attention or wider circulation (to a tweet) and it could have the opposite of the intended effect."

## **Trump's claim of bias**

The new policy comes a day after Trump doubled down on his criticism of Twitter, claiming the platform is biased and suppresses conservative voices despite the president's following of 61 million users.

"What they did to me on Twitter is incredible," Trump said on Wednesday. "I have millions and millions of followers, but I will tell you they make it very hard for people to join me on Twitter, and they make it very hard for me to get out the message."

Even as Trump attacks online platforms, his critics have claimed that he violates the terms of service of Twitter by attacking and insulting judges, media, sports figures and others with whom he disagrees.

In one instance, he retweeted a video that appeared to encourage violence against a Muslim lawmaker, and on another occasion praised a congressman for body-slammng a reporter.

Social media firms have been facing pressure to curb hate speech and extremist propaganda, blocking accounts of many conspiracy theorists. But Trump and his allies contend that the purge has also silenced conservative voices.

Earlier this week, Reddit said it had "quarantined" a popular forum of Trump supporters, claiming users repeatedly violated platform rules by promoting violence.

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