



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on September 6, 2018

## Tech Titans Testify About Foreign Meddling, Anti-conservative Bias

U.S. Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh wasn't the only public figure in the hot seat on Capitol Hill yesterday. Joining him were the chieftains of the social-media behemoths Facebook and Twitter.

Facebook's Sheryl Sandberg (shown, left) and Twitter's Jack Dorsey (right) appeared before the Senate Intelligence Committee to discuss how they plan to stop foreign agents from using their influential platform to meddle in U.S. affairs.



Then Dorsey went to the other side of the Hill for a grilling about Twitter's alleged bias against conservatives.

### Tracking Foreign Influence

Senators credited the two companies with trying to stop the foreign manipulation of the platforms, [the New York Times reported](#). "Each of you have come a long way with respect to recognizing the threat," said Virginia's Mark Warner.

But both execs admitted they "were late to discover that foreign operatives had used their sites to spread false and divisive messages," as the *Times* put it. "We were too slow to spot this and too slow to act. That's on us," Sandberg said. "This interference was completely unacceptable." Sandberg said Facebook is "more determined than our opponents and we will keep fighting."

Dorsey admitted as much as well, as [the Washington Post reported](#), telling the committee that Twitter's ankles had a party and invited its pants: "We found ourselves unprepared and ill-equipped for the immensity of the problems we've acknowledged," adding that "required changes won't be fast or easy. Today we're committing to the people and this committee to do it openly."

Answering the concerns of Senator Richard Burr (R-N.C.), the *Post* reported, who said "more foreign countries are now trying to use your products to shape and manipulate American political sentiment as an instrument of statecraft," the two tech execs explained what they were doing to stop it:

Sandberg stressed Facebook's work to hire more people to review content and invest more heavily in artificial intelligence that can spot fake accounts. Dorsey pledged a thorough review of the way Twitter works ... though he warned that whatever system the company unveils will not be able to detect all bots created by users.

Google didn't send anyone, as an empty chair behind Google's name showed. "To the invisible witness, good morning to you," California's Democratic [Senator Kamala Harris said](#).

President Trump opened fire on Google last week, claiming the company rigs its search results against conservatives, commentary followed by economic guru Lawrence Kudlow's threat to regulate the company.



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### **The Other Side of the Hill**

Appearing before the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Dorsey took withering fire from Republicans, who accused Twitter of bias against conservatives. But major media seem to have ignored Dorsey's admission that Twitter was indeed left-leaning, even if he didn't say it in so many words.

[Reported Breitbart](#), Representative Jeff Duncan (R-S.C.), told Dorsey that "when one of his staffers opened a brand new account with Twitter, the platform suggested the new account follow leftist accounts without exception":

All left-leaning political types, that's all she got as suggested for you to follow. Forget the fact that there aren't any Republicans or conservatives on that list — no singers? No actors? No athletes? No celebrities? She's a twenty-something female staffer, didn't even get Taylor Swift, Chris Pratt, Cristiano Ronaldo or Kim Kardashian. All she got was the suggestions that I had on the screen.

Replied the bearded tech titan, "Yeah, well we do have a lot more work to do in terms of our onboarding and obviously, you're pointing out some weaknesses in our signals that we use to craft those selections."

Representative Markwayne Mullin (R-Okla.), [Breitbart](#) reported, read the anti-white tweets from Sarah Jeong, who was [hired by the New York Times](#) to write editorials despite her openly racist remarks:

Rep. Mullin noted that when conservative activist Candace Owens swapped out 'white' for another group, she received a temporary suspension from Twitter, despite the fact that her tweets were intended to highlight the racism in Jeong's.

[Dorsey also admitted](#) that Twitter "failed our intended impartiality. Our algorithms were unfairly filtering 600,000 accounts, including some members of Congress, from our search auto-complete and latest results." [The New American reported](#) the shadow-banning in July. Dorsey continued,

We fixed it. But how did it happen? Our technology was using a decision-making criteria that considers the behavior of people following these accounts. We decided that wasn't fair, and corrected.

Representative Frank Pallone (D-N.J.), the committee's head Democrat, apparently didn't accept that testimony, [accusing the GOP](#) of disingenuously using the hearing as "one more mechanism to raise money and generate outrage." Republicans, he averred, "are desperately trying to rally their base by fabricating a problem that simply doesn't exist."

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