



FEC Proposes Probe to Investigate Right-wing Alternative Media Outlets

A Democrat-led FEC “inquisition” into foreign financial influences on U.S. elections has some fearing that conservative alternative media outlets may be in danger at a time when distrust of the mainstream media has led many Americans to rely on alternative media outlets for their news.

The *Washington Examiner* reports that a [bid](#) by Democrat Federal Election Commissioner Ellen Weintraub may target right-leaning outlets such as the Drudge Report, Infowars, and Breitbart News under the pretense of probing for foreign influence in federal and state elections through paid advertising.

Weintraub claims that illegal foreign influence could have played a role in the 2016 federal election and that it is necessary for the FEC to investigate campaign spending including media buys by overseas sources and partially-foreign-owned U.S. firms. She asserted, “I believe that this Commission can indeed rise to the challenge of understanding what happened in the 2016 election and plugging any legal or procedural holes that could allow foreign actors to interfere with our future elections.”

According to *Politico*, Weintraub was motivated to launch the probe after *Time* magazine cited intelligence officials who claimed that Russian agents purchased Facebook ads to distribute election-themed stories and that Breitbart News and Cambridge Analytica may have assisted Russian efforts to spread such content.

Time magazine also reported that the FBI was investigating whether right-wing sites such as Breitbart News and InfoWars coordinated with Russia to bombard social media sites with anti-Hillary Clinton stories.

The *Washington Examiner's* Paul Bedard contends that the probe should raise red flags, as it seems to be politically motivated. The outlet cites an elections law expert, also a critic of the Weintraub bid, who observed, “It’s pretty easy to see how this quickly becomes an inquisition into conservative media outlets.”

He continued, “Commissioner Weintraub appears to be laying the groundwork to subpoena people at Breitbart, Drudge, and Infowars — maybe even Matt Drudge and Alex Jones themselves.”

Critics of the FEC probe contend that the ultimate goal is to target the mainstream media’s competition and provide a convenient excuse for Hillary Clinton’s devastating election loss. But despite claims of Russian interference in the election, many experts contend the Democrats lost in November because the Democratic party’s globalist platform is out of touch with the rust-belt working class Americans.

“We’re going to be a regional party that fails to get into the majority, and fails to do things on behalf of those working class people that were the backbone of the Democratic Party for so long,” warned



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on July 12, 2017

Representative Tim Ryan (D-Ohio) following the presidential election. “White, black, brown, gay, straight, everybody wants economic opportunity and they don’t see the Democrats as the party providing that and we’d better get our stuff together.”

But Weintraub is seemingly unwilling to accept that explanation. She wrote in her proposal, “The mere allegation that foreign interference may have occurred shakes the faith of Americans in our democracy [sic]. The FEC must find out the facts of what happened during the 2016 U.S. presidential election and move swiftly and firmly to fix any problems we find.”

What Weintraub is proposing amounts to a rather significant federal power grab that goes far beyond the scope of the FEC’s powers. This is not the first time she has proposed politically motivated probes either; she previously recommended that the FEC focus on politically active U.S. corporations with foreign ownership. Last year, she proposed prohibiting companies with foreign ownership as small as five percent “from funding expenditures, independent expenditures, or electioneering communications.” The *Washington Examiner* [reported](#) at the time that the proposal would have affected mainstream media outlets such as Fox, the *Wall Street Journal*, and even the *New York Times*.

“Given everything we have learned this year, it blinks reality to suggest that that there is no risk of foreign nationals taking advantage of current loopholes to intercede invisibly in American elections,” she said. “This is a risk no member of the Federal Election Commission should be willing to tolerate.”

Unfortunately, that desire to keep foreign influences out of American elections does not seem to translate into efforts ensuring that non-citizens do not vote in American elections. In fact, astoundingly, Weintraub claims *there is no voter fraud*.

Meanwhile, despite Weintraub’s concerns about foreign financial influences, Freedom of Information Act requests [revealed](#) that three Democratic FEC members, including Weintraub, have taken at least 50 official trips to foreign countries paid for by foreign groups, governments, and U.S. taxpayers. In fact, records released by the Office of Governmental Ethics and the FEC and published by *The Hill* show that Weintraub engaged in more sponsored trips than any of her colleagues. The purposes of the trips have ranged from attending political conferences to observing foreign elections. The records revealed that none of the FEC’s three Republican commissioners took an agency-related international trip while serving on the commission.

The *Daily Caller* writes that while proponents of “international jet-setting by FEC commissioners” claim they are fulfilling their civic duties around the globe, critics note that it is “inappropriate for regulators to accept overseas funding for such trips, especially with foreign influence over the American government under deep scrutiny.”



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