



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on September 6, 2018

Sessions to Meet State Attorneys General to Consider Tech Company's "Stifling" of Free Speech

Department of Justice spokesman Devin O'Malley said in a statement issued near the end of a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing investigating social media on September 5 that Attorney General Jeff Sessions has scheduled a meeting with state attorneys general in September to discuss a "growing concern" that tech companies may be "intentionally stifling" the free flow of information on their platforms. "The Attorney General has convened a meeting with a number of state attorneys general this month to discuss a growing concern that these companies may be hurting competition and intentionally stifling the free exchange of ideas on their platforms," said O'Malley.



The Senate Committee hearings, however, at which Facebook's chief operating officer, Sheryl Sandberg; and Twitter's co-founder and chief executive officer, Jack Dorsey, appeared as witnesses, were held to address another matter: "foreign influence operations' use of social media platforms."

Politico noted that O'Malley said the DOJ "listened ... closely" to that hearing, but did not say whether what was discussed at the hearing contributed to Sessions' upcoming meetings with the state attorneys general.

The Hill reported on September 5 that Dorsey would appear later that day before members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, where he was expected to face questions on the allegations of conservative censorship. The hearing was entitled "Twitter: Transparency and Accountability." In his witness statement, Dorsey maintained: "Conservative voices have a strong presence on Twitter," offering as an example: ... in 2017, there were 59.5 million Tweets about Make America Great Again or MAGA."

Despite Dorsey's claims, *The Hill* observed that President Trump and conservative House Republicans have repeatedly voiced complaints about bias against conservatives on Facebook, Twitter, Google, and other social-media platforms. *Politico* noted that other prominent Republicans, including House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy and Trump campaign manager Brad Parscale, have made the same complaint.

A report in TechCrunch (an American online publisher of technology industry news) stated that it is not clear if the Justice Department is pushing for regulation or actively investigating the platforms for issues relating to competition — or antitrust violations. The report noted: "Social media companies aren't covered under U.S. free speech laws — like the First Amendment — but have long said they support free speech and expression across their platforms, including for users in parts of the world where freedom of speech is more restrictive."



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Photo of Jeff Sessions: [justice.gov](https://www.justice.gov)

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