



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on April 6, 2023

Twitter Tags NPR as “State-affiliated” Media, White House Denial Confirms the Designation

As of Tuesday night, NPR has a new tag beside its blue check-mark on Twitter. The liberal, federally funded media outlet is now labeled as “US state-affiliated media.” The “state-affiliated media” label has been applied in the past to such outlets as Russia Today, China Xinhua News, CGTN, and others to alert users that the content from those sources may be skewed in the interests of the governments that own or support them.



Mr.TinMD/flickr

The tag dates back to 2020, although at that time Twitter announced that media that received government funding but were “state-financed media organizations with editorial independence,” such as “the BBC in the UK or NPR in the U.S.,” were not considered “state-affiliated media” and would not carry the tag.

As of Tuesday night, though, Twitter — now owned by Elon Musk — no longer considers NPR exempt. In fact, after applying the tag to NPR, [Twitter amended its policy on “state-affiliated media” to remove the portion saying that NPR was excluded](#). The BBC retains its distinction.

It is likely that NPR would balk at the tag for purely optical reasons — after all, who would relish being listed alongside Russia Today and Xinhua News? But there is more to it than that: the tag serves to limit NPR’s exposure. As the Twitter policy explains:

In the case of state-affiliated media entities, Twitter will not recommend or amplify accounts or their Tweets with these labels to people.

And:

We will also add labels to Tweets that share links to state-affiliated media websites and will not recommend or amplify these Tweets to people.

So, with the “state-affiliated media” tag, neither NPR’s tweets nor any tweets from others about NPR articles or productions will be recommended or amplified. In short NPR’s social media reach has been substantially shortened. This will not impact the media group’s ability to be seen by the outlet’s nearly 9 million followers, but no NPR tweet, article, or production will find itself trending.

NPR and many of its liberal comrades in media immediately blasted Twitter and Musk for applying the tag, claiming that NPR is something quite distinct from “state-affiliated media.” NPR published an



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article [stating](#):

NPR operates independently of the U.S. government. And while federal money is important to the overall public media system, NPR gets less than 1% of its annual budget, on average, from federal sources.

Noting the millions of listeners who support and rely upon NPR for “independent, fact-based journalism,” NPR CEO John Lansing stated, “NPR stands for freedom of speech and holding the powerful accountable. It is unacceptable for Twitter to label us this way. A vigorous, vibrant free press is essential to the health of our democracy.”

The Washington Post [said](#):

The designation puts NPR, which has 8.8 million followers on the site, in the same category as propaganda outlets like the Russian-government-owned RT and the Chinese Communist Party’s People’s Daily newspaper. Both are also “state-affiliated media,” according to Twitter.

The New York Times, HuffPost, CNN, and a litany of the usual suspects all took shots at Twitter and defended NPR. For his part, Musk pointed to the policy defining “state-affiliated media” as “outlets where the state exercises control over editorial content through financial resources, direct or indirect political pressures, and/or control over production and distribution,” tweeting, “Seems accurate.”

And while NPR claims that it is not “state-affiliated” since “less than 1% of its annual budget” comes from federal sources, it is important to note two things: First, NPR [notoriously operates in a deficit](#), so that “less than 1%” is likely terribly important. Further, when state funding is factored in, the total — by NPR’s own figures — is closer to four percent. Second — and more importantly — NPR has long acted as a public-relations arm of the liberal establishment within government. This is apropos, since Twitter’s policy states that a media outlet “where the state exercises control over editorial content through *financial resources, direct or indirect* political pressures, and/or control over production and distribution” (emphasis added) is considered “state-affiliated media.”

To ice the cake, in a move that gives the lie to NPR’s feigned shock, the White House stepped in to defend it. White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre addressed the issue in a press briefing, saying NPR’s journalists “work diligently to hold public officials accountable and inform the American people,” adding, “The hard-hitting independent nature of their coverage speaks for itself.”

This writer cannot ignore such low-hanging fruit. First, if the “the hard-hitting independent nature of [NPR’s] coverage speaks for itself,” the White House press secretary wouldn’t need to speak for it at all. But there she is, doing exactly that. Second, to put this in perspective, let’s change the roles a bit, shall we? If Dmitry Sergeyevich Peskov (press secretary for Russian President Vladimir Putin) said the same thing about Russia Today, American media would justly tout his statement as evidence of Russia Today’s “state-affiliated media” status. After all, did anyone expect Jean-Pierre to say anything different? Her denial is as close to an admission as you can get without her just shrugging her shoulders and saying, “So, what?”

And while liberals are all busy decrying this move as an example of Twitter not clearly defining — and



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following — rules for how it handles users’ accounts, conservatives who lived through years of shadowbanning, unexplained suspensions, de-platforming, and worse before the Musk buyout should remind them that “Twitter is a private company,” and if they don’t like it, “they should start their own platform.”

In the end, Twitter has clearly (and accurately) defined NPR as a “state-affiliated media” outlet and limited the outlet’s exposure, and NPR will just have to deal with it. After all, it’s not as though Twitter banned the president of the United States. That would be something for media to be upset about.



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