



One Hundred Eighteenth Congress  
Committee on Homeland Security  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

June 14, 2023

Mr. Alex Stamos  
Director  
Stanford Internet Observatory  
Encina Hall  
616 Jane Stanford Way  
Stanford, CA 94305

Dear Mr. Stamos:

The Committee on Homeland Security (Committee) is investigating the federal government's efforts to censor public discourse under the guise of countering misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation. Specifically, the Committee is seeking information on the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's (CISA) partnership with non-governmental organizations and social media companies that potentially suppressed Americans' speech.

During the 2020 election, four non-governmental organizations formed a consortium called the Election Integrity Project (EIP) to monitor and suppress election "misinformation" online.<sup>1</sup> The four organizations include the Stanford Internet Observatory, University of Washington's Center for an Informed Public, The Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab, and Graphika.<sup>2</sup> EIP used student analysts to monitor social media and flag content as "misinformation."<sup>3</sup> EIP tracked flagged content through a "ticketing workflow management system" that operated through Jira Service Desk software.<sup>4</sup> The tickets tracked discussions among EIP analysts and outside stakeholders, including CISA and other government partners.<sup>5</sup> In total, EIP processed 639 "in-scope" tickets, collected 859 million tweets for analysis, and flagged 21 politically right-oriented Twitter accounts as "prominent repeat spreaders" of misinformation.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ELECTION INTEGRITY PARTNERSHIP, THE LONG FUSE: MISINFORMATION AND THE 2020 ELECTION 2-6 (2021), <https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:tr171zs0069/EIP-Final-Report.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> *Censorship Laundering: How the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Enables the Silencing of Dissent: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Oversight, Investigations, and Accountability of the H. Comm. on Homeland Sec.*, 118th Cong. (May 11, 2023) (written testimony of Benjamin Weingarten at 5).

<sup>3</sup> *Supra* note 1 at 9. EIP also allowed "trusted external stakeholders" to submit tickets for analysis. *Id.* at 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 8, 24.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 12.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 27, 187-188.

After the 2020 election, the consortium switched gears to target “narratives that questioned the safety, distribution, and effectiveness of the [COVID-19] vaccines.”<sup>7</sup> For this effort, the group rebranded as the Virality Project and brought on new partners.<sup>8</sup> Based on its final report, it appears the Virality Project continued to use the same business systems as EIP, including some of the same staff and the Jira Service Desk software to log its work.<sup>9</sup>

While both the EIP and the Virality Project published final reports describing their work, much of the process, particularly the extent of CISA’s and other government entities’ participation, remains unclear. Additionally, CISA officials repeatedly deny engaging in censorship,<sup>10</sup> but the evidence uncovered so far suggests CISA has, in fact, engaged in proxy censorship through partners like EIP, circumventing Americans’ First Amendment protections. In total, the Virality Project created 911 tickets.<sup>11</sup>

The opaque nature and extent of CISA’s involvement in online censorship, including its communications with EIP and the Virality Project necessitate the Committee’s review of EIP and Virality Project tickets, as the Committee considers potential legislation. To assist the Committee with its investigation, please provide as soon as possible, but no later than June 28, 2023:

1. All “tickets”<sup>12</sup> created for the EIP using the Jira Service Desk platform; and
2. All “tickets”<sup>13</sup> created for the Virality Project using the Jira Service Desk platform.

An attachment contains instructions for responding to this request. Please contact the Committee on Homeland Security Majority staff at (202) 226-8417 with any questions about this request.

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<sup>7</sup> THE VIRALITY PROJECT, MEMES, MAGNETS, AND MICROCHIPS NARRATIVE DYNAMICS AROUND COVID-19 VACCINES 4 (2022), [https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:mx395xj8490/Virality\\_project\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:mx395xj8490/Virality_project_final_report.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> *Supra* note 7 at 28.

<sup>10</sup> *See Budget Hearing – Fiscal Year 2024 Request for the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Appropriations*, 118th Cong. (Mar. 28, 2023) (testimony of CISA Director, Jen Easterly) (testifying that “we don’t censor anything . . . we don’t flag anything to social media organizations at all . . . we don’t do any censorship.”); Ryan Lovelace, *Biden Official Disputes Role in Social Media Censorship Amid Court-ordered Deposition*, THE WASHINGTON TIMES, Nov. 1, 2022, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/nov/1/biden-official-disputes-role-social-media-censorsh> (quoting CISA Director Jen Easterly’s statements at a Center for Strategic and International Studies event, “[w]e don’t work with the platforms on what they do around content . . . [a]nd I want to be very clear about this: We do not censor information.”).

<sup>11</sup> *Supra* note 7 at 27.

<sup>12</sup> The EIP describes its incident tracking system as “tickets.” ELECTION INTEGRITY PARTNERSHIP, THE LONG FUSE: MISINFORMATION AND THE 2020 ELECTION 8 (2021), <https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:tr171zs0069/EIP-Final-Report.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> The Virality Project describes its incident tracking system as “tickets.” THE VIRALITY PROJECT, MEMES, MAGNETS, AND MICROCHIPS NARRATIVE DYNAMICS AROUND COVID-19 VACCINES 27 (2022), [https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:mx395xj8490/Virality\\_project\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:mx395xj8490/Virality_project_final_report.pdf).

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Per Rule X of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Committee on Homeland Security is the principal committee of jurisdiction for overall homeland security policy and has special oversight of “all Government activities relating to homeland security, including the interaction of all departments and agencies with the Department of Homeland Security.”

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



MARK E. GREEN, M.D.  
Chairman



DAN BISHOP  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Oversight,  
Investigations, and Accountability

Encl.

cc: The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member  
Committee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Glenn Ivey, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Accountability