

August 12, 2022

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman
Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th
Attack on the United States Capitol
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Liz Cheney
Vice Chair
Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th
Attack on the United States Capitol
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Thompson and Vice Chair Cheney,

To further the mission of the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, we write to provide research prepared by Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) Intelligence Project experts. We strongly support the essential work of the Select Committee. The Committee's findings and recommendations will be critical for lawmakers and the public to help understand the architects behind the January 6 attack, how to hold those planners and perpetrators – and those who financed and inspired them to action – accountable, and necessary steps to safeguard future elections and our country's democratic institutions. We would ask that this statement be included as part of the Select Committee's official record.

Established in 1971, SPLC has been relentless in identifying and rooting out extremist groups to create a fair, inclusive, and unified nation. We are a nonprofit advocacy organization serving as a catalyst for racial justice throughout the South. We work in partnership with communities of color to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements through transformative policies and initiatives, and advance human rights of all people. We have deep expertise in monitoring the activities of domestic hate groups and other extremists – including the Ku Klux Klan, the neo-Nazi movement, neo-Confederates, racist skinheads, antigovernment militias, and others. We currently track hundreds of extremist groups operating across the country and publish investigative reports, share key intelligence, and offer expert analysis to the media and public.

People who adhere to a radical right ideology have built up more financial support for their activism than at any time in modern history, enabling them to stage events like the attack on the Capitol on January 6, and develop previously inaccessible inroads into mainstream culture. They have raised these funds by pushing for donations online, trading

cryptocurrency, exploiting gamified websites, opening subscription services, selling merchandise, soliciting dues, and launching speaking tours.

Donations and dues in fiat money

Radical right groups solicit donations in ways that are similar to methods used by mainstream political campaigns, but they sometimes seek out funding mechanisms which have fewer or more relaxed policies around who can use their services. Such “alternative finance” organizations help extremists raise funds without being removed, or deplatformed, from more traditional financial options. Crowdfunding is one such alternative financial model that is exploited by extremists who want to solicit donations from large numbers of people.

People who pushed Trump’s lies about the 2020 election in the runup to the Capitol attack crowdfunded through GiveSendGo, a Christian fundraising site which has demonstrated more tolerance for extremists¹ than the more trafficked GoFundMe.² GoFundMe removed Pro-Trump activist Matt Braynard's “Voter Integrity Project” campaign from its site shortly after the election, but he quickly relaunched it on GiveSendGo.

“When GoFundMe cancelled [sic] you, I knew your project must be particularly devastating for the powers that be that want to take control of America so I decided to go all in!,” a donor who gave Braynard a \$3000 donation commented on the site.³

Hackers breached GiveSendGo at least four times and dumped the data of its users, making the site a tenuous bet for proponents of radical right activism who prefer to remain anonymous.⁴ Table 1 shows the earnings from a selection of sixteen GiveSendGo campaigns launched before and after the January 6 attack on the Capitol. Collectively these campaigns earned nearly \$1.5 million for a variety of needs including travel to the event, medical care and legal fees following multiple violent melees, and even “gear and communications” devices. Five of the campaigns were eventually removed from the platform.

Sympathizers and proponents of the insurrection also used conventional fundraising models like political action committees (PACs), donation websites, limited liability corporations (LLCs) and email pleas. Radical right lawyer Sidney Powell started a PAC called Defending

¹ Majlie de Puy Kamp and Scott Glover, “Right-wing extremists and their supporters use Christian website to raise funds”, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/19/us/give-send-go-extremism-invs/index.html>, CNN, January 20, 2021.

² Jason Wilson, “Proud Boys and other far-right groups raise millions via Christian funding site”, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/10/proud-boys-far-right-givesendgo-christian-fundraising-site>, The Guardian, April 10, 2021.

³ Archive of Voter Integrity Project, Internet Archive. https://web.archive.org/web/20220000000000*/https://www.givesendgo.com/VoterIntegrity.

⁴ David Gilbert, “Hackers Leak Entire Donor History of Every Campaign on This Christian Crowdfunding Site”, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/wxd4zq/givesendgo-donor-list-hacker-leak>, Vice, February 16, 2022.

the Republic which raised \$14 million to promote lies about a stolen election.⁵ Hard right political operative Roger Stone solicited donations on stopthesteal.org. A law firm that backs one of Stone’s proteges, Ali Alexander, registered an LLC called Stop the Steal on November 13, 2020, as extremists started to gather with regularity across the country to express anger over Trump’s defeat by Joe Biden.⁶

*Table 1. Earnings for selected GiveSendGo campaigns, before and after the January 6 attack. ** indicates campaign was removed*

Affiliation	Campaign Name	Date	Wanted	Earned
StopTheSteal	Matt Braynard: Voter Integrity Project	2020-11-07	\$590,000.00	\$675,512.00
StopTheSteal	Backdated Ballot Whistleblower Coerced by FEDS	2020-11-28	\$250,000.00	\$236,380.00
StopTheSteal	SIDNEY POWELL MONEYBOMB	2020-12-10	\$200,000.00	\$6,516.00
Proud Boys	Help for Noblebeard who was Stabbed in DC	2020-12-17	\$100,000.00	\$61,255.00
Proud Boys	Send Montana Back to Dc Jan 6th**	2020-12-25	\$8,000.00	\$40,559.00
Proud Boys	Medical Assistance fo [sic] DC ProudBoy Victims**	2020-12-28	\$100,000.00	\$106,057.00
<i>January 6 attack</i>				
Proud Boys	Legal Fees for Nick Ochs following Protest in DC**	2021-01-08	\$100,000.00	\$19,637.00
Proud Boys	Enrique Tarrío Defense Fund **	2021-01-09	\$200,000.00	\$113,056.00
Proud Boys	Protective gear and communications	2021-01-21	\$5,000.00	\$18,951.00
Proud Boys	Joe Biggs Support and Defense Funds**	2021-01-21	\$20,000.00	\$8,973.00
Oath Keepers	Help the Meggs Family	2021-03-14	\$200,000.00	\$153,528.00
America First	Baked Alaska Legal Defense Fund	2021-04-07	\$100,000.00	\$23,475.00
Oath Keepers	Stewart Rhodes Legal Defense Fund	2022-01-30	\$250,000.00	\$12,451.00
America First	Patrick Casey: Help me beat the January 6 Committee	2022-02-04	\$10,000.00	\$2,001.00
Total				\$1,478,351.00

Antigovernment groups like the Oath Keepers and Three Percenters have used group email pleas for fundraising as well as in person requests to big money donors to accrue funds, according to Southern Poverty Law Center’s in-house research.

Donors to the racist non-profit VDARE, which pushed election lies and published commentary from Stop the Steal proponent Michelle Malkin, gave them a whopping \$4.3 million in 2019, shattering previous fundraising records, according to tax documents reviewed by Southern Poverty Law Center and Center for Media and Democracy in a

⁵ Emma Brown, Rosalind S. Helderman, Isaac Stanley-Becker and Josh Dawsey, “Sidney Powell group raised more than \$14 million spreading election falsehoods”, https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/sidney-powell-defending-republic-donations/2021/12/06/61bdb004-53ef-11ec-8769-2f4ecdf7a2ad_story.html, Washington Post, December 6, 2021.

⁶ Michael Edison Hayden, “Law Firm Tied to Far-Right Fringe Registers Stop the Steal LLC in Alabama”, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2020/12/18/law-firm-tied-far-right-fringe-registers-stop-steal-llc-alabama>, SPLC Hatewatch, December 18, 2020.

collaborative report. DonorsTrust gave \$1.5 million to VDARE that year alone. DonorsTrust has ties to Charles Koch and the family of Robert Mercer.⁷

Some of the groups with members that breached the Capitol building that day also collect membership dues to fund their organization. The Oath Keepers solicit dues, and leaked documents have led to the identification of high-profile members because of it.⁸ The Proud Boys also solicit dues, sometimes using mainstream platforms like the payment app Venmo.⁹

Donations in cryptocurrency

Cryptocurrency, a type of money maintained through decentralized computer systems, has played a revolutionizing role on the radical right, helping rich donors give tens of millions of dollars to extremists without using the means of conventional finance.

Radical right groups who spread Trump's lies about the 2020 election pulled in large amounts of cryptocurrency in the runup to the attack on the Capitol on January 6, 2021, although it is unclear how connected those donations are to the event itself. A high percentage of people involved in stirring the atmosphere that led to violence that day own or trade cryptocurrency, which tracks with the percentage of people who adhere to a radical right ideology in comparison to the population at large.¹⁰

On December 8, 2020 French computer programmer Laurent Bachelier gave 13.5 Bitcoin¹¹ to livestreamer Nicholas J. Fuentes, one Bitcoin to former white nationalist group leader Patrick Casey, one Bitcoin to VDARE and one Bitcoin to The Daily Stormer.¹² Each of these entities played critical roles in the online white supremacist ecosystem when Bachelier turned over the funds.¹³ Each of them also spread lies about the 2020 presidential election. Bachelier, who gave over \$500,000 in cryptocurrency to radical right causes before his

⁷ Alex Kotch and Michael Edison Hayden, "Donors Pumped Millions into White Nationalist Group", <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2021/06/17/donors-pumped-millions-white-nationalist-group>, SPLC Hatewatch, June 17, 2021.

⁸ Creede Newton, "Judicial Watch Investigations Director Listed As Dues-paying Oath Keeper, Leak Shows", <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2021/11/02/judicial-watch-investigations-director-listed-dues-paying-oath-keeper-leak-shows>, SPLC Hatewatch, November 2, 2021.

⁹ Megan Squire, "Understanding Gray Networks Using Social Media Trace Data", 11th International Conference on Social Informatics. https://dl.acm.org/doi/abs/10.1007/978-3-030-34971-4_14, 202-217, November 19, 2019.

¹⁰ Michael Edison Hayden and Megan Squire, "How Cryptocurrency Revolutionized the White Supremacist Movement", <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2021/12/09/how-cryptocurrency-revolutionized-white-supremacist-movement>, SPLC Hatewatch, December 9, 2021.

¹¹ Michael Edison Hayden, "Nick Fuentes Faces Scrutiny Following Jan. 6 Subpoena", <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2022/01/20/nick-fuentes-faces-scrutiny-following-jan-6-subpoena>, SPLC Hatewatch, January 20, 2022

¹² Erika Kinetz and Lori Hinnant, "White Dissidents' Raise Millions in Cryptocurrency", <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/far-right-extremists-raise-millions-cryptocurrency-bitcoin/>, Associated Press, September 27, 2021.

¹³ Op. Cit. Kotch and Hayden.

death, never specified the importance of the 2020 election when making these donations, but it is notable that many white supremacist figures or groups disavowed Trump at different times during his presidency and Bachelier chose to give money to those that did not do so.¹⁴ In fact, he gave the bulk of his money to Fuentes, who inspired crowds of young white nationalists to rally around Trump's election lies.¹⁵

"I care about what happens after my death," Bachelier wrote in a suicide note after making the donations. "That's why I decided to leave my wealth to certain causes and people."

Some donors who embrace a radical right ideology maintain anonymity by sending so-called privacy cryptocurrencies, like the highly controversial Monero, which masks transactions from public visibility.¹⁶ The Daily Stormer has trafficked in Monero since at least 2017, and so does Fuentes, according to Simon Dickerman, who collaborated with Fuentes at the time he helped lead Stop the Steal events but defected from his "America First" group in 2022.¹⁷ Dickerman claimed on a July 2022 livestream that the bulk of Fuentes' recent funding came from a single wealthy benefactor who gave Monero donations, as opposed to America First relying on a grassroots funding model.

Fuentes and the neo-Nazi group National Justice Party both use services such as BitPay to obscure the trail of money that flows into their coffers through online donation forms. BitPay generates new Bitcoin addresses for each online donation, making the flow of funds difficult to trace.¹⁸ Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, and The Daily Stormer also use this technique, pairing it with so-called Bitcoin "mixing" services, which have been implicated in money laundering crimes, to obscure the source and destination of funds.¹⁹

Alex Jones, who played a pivotal role in sowing doubt about the 2020 election, started pulling in large cryptocurrency donations after January 6, 2021 as pressure mounted surrounding lawsuits brought on by the parents of children killed at Sandy Hook elementary school. SPLC found that an anonymous donor dropped roughly \$8 million worth of Bitcoin on Jones in the span of a few weeks around March 2022, buoying the extremist's finances

¹⁴ Archive version of Michelle Malkin, "No Election Justice, No Election Peace", <https://web.archive.org/web/20220802160635/https://vdare.com/articles/michelle-malkin-no-election-justice-no-election-peace>, VDARE, December 1, 2020.

¹⁵ Op. Cit. Hayden, 2022.

¹⁶ Hannah Murphy, "Monero emerges as crypto of choice for cybercriminals", <https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2021/06/monero-emerges-as-crypto-of-choice-for-cybercriminals/>, Ars Technica, June 22, 2021.

¹⁷ Michael Edison Hayden, Hannah Gais and Megan Squire, "Pro Trump White Nationalist Group Facing Key Desertions", <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2022/06/02/pro-trump-white-nationalist-group-facing-key-desertions>, SPLC Hatewatch, June 2, 2022

¹⁸ Op. Cit. Hayden and Squire, December 2021.

¹⁹ Michael Edison Hayden and Megan Squire, "Neo-Nazi's Bitcoin History Suggests Russian Darknet Link", <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2021/07/15/neo-nazis-bitcoin-history-suggests-russian-darknet-link>, SPLC Hatewatch, July 15, 2021.

at a time when they appeared vulnerable.²⁰ Although the significant donations do not necessarily relate to the attack on the Capitol, they illustrate how and why wealthy donors turn to cryptocurrency to donate to extremists. SPLC has not yet been able to identify the person that issued the large Bitcoin donations to Jones.

Enrique Tarrío, former leader of the Proud Boys, also solicited cryptocurrency to help with his legal fees stemming from his involvement in violent pro-Trump marches preceding the January 6 attack. He managed to raise \$4900 from three donors. Although this is a smaller amount than the \$113,000 he was able to solicit on GiveSendGo, the cryptocurrency donors will likely remain anonymous, unlike the thousands of users who were unmasked in the GiveSendGo data breaches.

Livestreaming revenue

A number of people who helped create the atmosphere of deception which preceded the attack on the Capitol did so by streaming live videos on YouTube, DLive,²¹ or Entropy, generating revenue through infrastructure embedded in those websites.²²

People like Fuentes, Timothy “Baked Alaska” Gionet, Tim Pool, two Proud Boys who identified by the moniker Murder the Media and radio host Pete Santilli all generated funds through livestream broadcasts in the runup to or during the insurrection. The dynamic created by these websites incentivizes extremists to give the audience what they want because satisfied viewers return for more content and are more likely to give donations during broadcasts.

Fuentes and Gionet both livestreamed on the video gaming-themed website DLive in the runup to the insurrection on January 6, 2022.²³ Gionet, a racist and antisemitic internet performer who also livestreamed through YouTube from the 2017 deadly Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, even took his DLive virtual audience into Nancy Pelosi’s office as he and other extremists moved through the Capitol building that afternoon. DLive lures in the youth-skewed video gaming community through its gamified user interface which enables streamers to rack up cartoon emblemated tokens that are traded on a blockchain, like cryptocurrency. Fans of streamers can also bestow the performers with these tokens, which is how Fuentes and Gionet used it before DLive suspended them after the insurrection.²⁴

²⁰ Megan Squire and Michael Edison Hayden, “Alex Jones’ Bitcoin Fairy Drops \$8 Million in a Month on Infowars”, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2022/05/26/alex-jones-bitcoin-8-million-infowars> , SPLC Hatewatch, May 26, 2022.

²¹ Megan Squire, “Monetizing Propaganda: How Far-right Extremists Earn Money by Video Streaming”, 13th International ACM Web Science Conference, 158-167, <https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/3447535.3462490>, June 2021.

²² Jason Wilson and Megan Squire, “Revealed: Startup Creates Streaming Platform for Extremists on Big-Tech Infrastructure”, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2021/12/19/revealed-startup-creates-streaming-platform-extremists-big-tech-infrastructure> . SPLC Hatewatch, December 19, 2021.

²³ Op. Cit. Hayden, 2021.

²⁴ Hannah Gais and Michael Edison Hayden. “Extremists Are Cashing in on a Youth-Targeted Gaming Website”,

Pete Santilli, another Dlive streamer who the company eventually suspended, used his livestreams and a private Telegram channel to organize transportation and lodging for January 6 attendees. In the runup to the Capitol attack, SPLC calculated that Santilli earned over \$71,000 in Dlive donations.²⁵ Before his January 6 activities, Santilli was most known for using his radio show and YouTube channel to promote "patriot" events such as a lackluster 2013 trucker protest in Washington DC²⁶, a failed²⁷ 2014 biker-led shutdown of the southern border²⁸ and the 2016 armed occupation of the Malheur wildlife refuge in Oregon that lasted for 41 days and ended with dozens of arrests and the death of one participant²⁹. Santilli is also a frequent collaborator with Alex Jones of Infowars.

Tim Pool, a YouTube performer who played a critical role in spreading doubts about the 2020 election, generates significant personal profits from his performances, which have included guest spots from election lie peddlers like Tarrío of the Proud Boys, Marjorie Taylor Greene, and disinformation peddler Jack Posobiec. Pool's followers gave him money through YouTube's SuperChat function in the runup to the attack. SuperChats are a way for viewers of a video stream to give their comments greater visibility on the site during each stream. In their SuperChat comments, Pool's followers appeared to advocate violence in the runup to the attack on the Capitol and also celebrated their wishes coming into fruition afterwards.³⁰

Revenue from sales

Adherents of a radical right ideology also market themselves like rock bands, selling merchandise like t-shirts and hosting events with ticket sales. Alex Jones of Infowars, who played a critical role in inspiring people to show up at the Capitol on January 6, 2021, notoriously peddles dietary supplements and other products, and these sales appear to be a principal motivator for his hard right activism. Southern Poverty Law Center obtained leaked audio of Jones badmouthing Trump in January 2019, two years before he helped push Stop

<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2020/11/17/extremists-are-cashing-youth-targeted-gaming-websites>, SPLC Hatewatch, November 17, 2020.

²⁵ Op. Cit. Squire, 2021.

²⁶ David Niewart, "Right-Wing Truckers Threaten to Shut Down Washington",

<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2013/10/08/right-wing-truckers-threaten-shut-down-washington>, SPLC Hatewatch, October 8, 2013.

²⁷ David Niewart, "Watch Pete Santilli's Border Shutdown Protest Fail Spectacularly",

<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2014/07/15/watch-pete-santillis-border-shutdown-protest-fail-spectacularly>, SPLC Hatewatch, July 15, 2014.

²⁸ Sarah Miller, "Pete Santilli Rallies for Border Shutdown, Calls Obama an 'Unconstitutional Treasonous Bastard'",

<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2014/06/26/pete-santilli-rallies-border-shutdown-calls-obama-unconstitutional-treasonous-bastard>, SPLC Hatewatch, June 26, 2014.

²⁹ Bill Morlin, "Armed Takeover Violated Law, Prosecutor Argues as Trial Begins",

<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/09/14/armed-takeover-violated-law-prosecutor-argues-trial-begins>, SPLC Hatewatch, September 14, 2016

³⁰ Michael Edison Hayden, "YouTube Profiting From Timcast IRL, Study Finds",

<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2022/05/05/youtube-profiting-timcast-irl-study-finds>, SPLC Hatewatch, May 5, 2022

the Steal in an effort to keep him in office.³¹ But SPLC also found that Jones' Infowars Store website, which hosts his product, boasted a significant uptick in traffic while he promoted Stop the Steal, helping to demonstrate how selling merchandise may have contributed to his decision-making process at that time.³²

Extremist groups sell many other products to stay afloat. The neo-Nazi group National Justice Party overlaps in ideology with a bookseller called Antelope Hill, which publishes racist and antisemitic literature. The group runs a good portion of their business through the highly trafficked retailer Amazon.³³ Proud Boys have for years sold t-shirts and other merchandise glorifying violence and fascism. Mainstream online retailers, like Etsy, have prohibited the sale of their products in recent years.³⁴ Websites that push extremist content also sell space for advertisements, but advertisers sometimes seek to cut ties with extremists and those who traffic in politically charged disinformation.³⁵

Since many tech companies forbid extremists from using their services, they sometimes move from company-to-company until they find one that hosts them.³⁶ After tech companies cut ties with the white supremacist social media website Gab following the Tree of Life Synagogue massacre in Pittsburgh, its CEO Andrew Torba resorted to using an obscure company called Second Amendment Processing to sell merchandise and subscriptions. Moves to obscure operators like this can be risky. The Southern Poverty Law Center discovered that a man previously convicted of financial crimes ran that company.³⁷

People involved with pushing lies about the 2020 election also stage events to raise money. Fuentes, who has involved himself in so many of the fundraising methods listed above, also sells tickets to his annual America First (AFPAC) conference, which has featured hard right

³¹ Michael Edison Hayden, "Alex Jones on Leaked Video: 'I Wish I Never Met Trump'", <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2021/03/02/alex-jones-leaked-video-i-wish-i-never-met-trump> , SPLC Hatewatch, March 2, 2021.

³² Megan Squire and Michael Edison Hayden, "Infowars Store Enjoyed Traffic Boost During 'Stop the Steal'", <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2022/04/06/infowars-store-enjoyed-traffic-boost-during-stop-steal> , SPLC Hatewatch, April 6, 2022.

³³ Hannah Gais, Michael Edison Hayden, Megan Squire, and Jason Wilson. "White Nationalist Book Publishers Revealed", <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2022/06/13/white-nationalist-book-publishers-revealed> , June 13, 2022.

³⁴ James Vincent, "Etsy removes Proud Boy merchandise", <https://www.theverge.com/2020/10/6/21503847/proud-boy-merchandise-stand-back-stand-by-remove-d-etsy-amazon-teespring> , SPLC Hatewatch, October 6, 2020.

³⁵ Claire Goforth, "Advertisers keep dropping the Post Millennial for employing Andy Ngo", <https://www.dailydot.com/debug/the-post-millennial-losing-advertisers-andy-ngo/> , Daily Dot, October 1, 2021.

³⁶ Olivia Solon and Leticia Miranda, "'Too little, too late': Extremism experts criticize payment companies", <https://www.nbcnews.com/business/business-news/too-little-too-late-extremism-experts-criticize-payment-companies-n1253982> , NBC News, January 13, 2021.

³⁷ John Dougherty, "Gab's Payment Processor Run By Felon", <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2019/03/07/gabs-payment-processor-run-felon> , SPLC Hatewatch, March 7, 2019.

speakers like Congresspeople Paul Gosar and Marjorie Taylor Greene. The Southern Poverty Law Center reported that the man Fuentes hired to manage the AFPAC conference was also fined by the Commodities Futures Trading Commission after leading a cryptocurrency trading "scheme" in which over 40 investors lost more than \$300,000 they invested in his care.³⁸

Former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn, who has trafficked in rhetoric associated with the QAnon conspiracy theory, embarked in 2022 on the "ReAwaken America" tour. Roger Stone, who first created the Stop the Steal movement in 2016, also participated in the speaking tour.³⁹ Tour organizers are offering a 50% ticket discount for pastors, according to a promotional flier for the event.

Policy Recommendations

The values that drive our financial policy recommendations are based on respect for human rights and an expectation that people deserve:

- protection from harms online,
- freedom of legal expression and access to commerce online, and
- transparency in decision-making by governments and technology companies.

Recommendations for Tech Companies

1. Most tech companies have their own Terms of Service, essentially rules of the road. The SPLC encourages corporations to create – and enforce – policies and terms of service to ensure that social media platforms, payment service providers, and other internet-based services do not provide platforms where hateful activities and extremism can grow and lead to domestic terrorism.
2. When tech companies do decide to act against hate, it is too often only after a violent attack has occurred. They need to proactively address the problem of extremist content on their platforms rather than simply react after people have been killed. Tech companies must commit to **being proactive in taking financial harms seriously**. Terrorists and hate groups using their platforms to raise money is a serious problem that is causing real harms to real people. Companies should commit to **regular outside audits** to measure the financial harms caused by their platforms. These audits should also include an evaluation of how their systems are being abused, and whether their Terms of Service are being enforced equally. Critically, the companies must commit to hearing – and acting on – the results of these audits.

³⁸ Megan Squire and Michael Edison Hayden, "AFPAC Co-Planner Led Crypto 'Solicitation Scheme'", <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2022/03/29/afpac-co-planner-led-crypto-solicitation-scheme>, SPLC Hatewatch, March 29, 2022.

³⁹ Matthew Loh, "Venue cancels pro-Trump tour featuring Michael Flynn and Roger Stone after a community petition warned it could attract white supremacists", <https://news.yahoo.com/venue-cancels-pro-trump-tour-045513937.html>, Insider, July 19, 2022.

3. Tech companies should **coordinate** to understand how the impact of one company's actions affects the others. For example, when one platform removes a problematic individual, group, or network, what happens then? The troublemaker goes to another platform and continues their bad behavior. Company A washes its hands of the matter, but the problem is simply transferred to Company B. Companies must coordinate to **anticipate and measure this phenomenon**. This must be done within and across sectors – banking companies, social media companies, device manufacturers, infrastructure providers – and should include companies large and small.
4. Tech companies must understand and **appreciate their unique position** as the single largest storehouses of human knowledge about complex socio-technical problems, including terrorist funding. Tech companies store vast quantities of invaluable, irreplaceable data, and currently they are the sole arbiters of who gets to use that data and for what purpose. Tech companies should be rewarded for **using their data for good**. They should proactively engage outside research partners to put their vast quantities of data to work to understand terrorist funding. These efforts must go beyond just providing pre-curated data sets to the same preferred university partners.
5. Tech companies must redesign their “Trust and Safety” systems to **reward people who want to do the right thing**. Why does it take ten clicks to report content on Platform X? Why does Platform X remove content when a journalist questions them but not when Sally from Indianapolis clicks the “flag” button? Just as tech companies have “bug bounty” programs to allow outside cybersecurity researchers to get paid for reporting software flaws, people who point out platform weaknesses should be rewarded, not punished or ignored. At the same time, services must not solely rely on users to report content. Small companies should be financially rewarded for building powerful, proactive teams that keep their services safe and abuse-free.

Recommendations for the Biden Administration and Congress

1. **Words matter**. It is impossible to overstate the importance of elected officials, civic leaders, and candidates for office using their public platforms to condemn hate and political violence and to denounce violent threats or appeals to prejudice made by supporters or anyone associated with their campaigns. Community, faith, and business leaders must also be empowered to speak out against incitement, calls for violence, and appeals to prejudice in political campaigns – and be willing to hold political leaders accountable to their failure or refusals to reject and denounce appeals made on their behalf.
2. Government should require regular, mandatory **reporting** by technology service providers to document abuse of their systems including financial support of violence, harassment, and terrorism.

- a. This includes implementation of mandatory financial abuse reporting requirements for internet services operating in the United States, including social media services, infrastructure providers, banking institutions, cryptocurrency exchanges, crowdfunding sites, gaming sites, video streaming platforms, and the like.
 - b. These reporting requirements should extend to entities providing any financial services – whether profit-making or not, virtual currency-based, cryptocurrency-based, decentralized, or otherwise.
 - c. Internet services should be required to investigate and report the details of harms and abuse of their service. There should be support provided to smaller companies to do this work, and penalties applied to services that refuse these tracking and reporting responsibilities.
 - d. Penalties and support should be proportional to the size and capabilities of each service. Critically, small and not-for-profit services should be afforded financial and operational assistance in tracking, reporting, and remediating the financial harms perpetuated by their platforms.
3. Government should invest in **basic and applied research**. Many thorny issues – such as how financial exploitation can be tracked on encrypted platforms, for example, or how cryptocurrency transactions can be tracked at scale – may have technology-based solutions.
- a. We urge lawmakers to prioritize funding programs for research into technologies that can be used to detect and prevent online financial harms while preserving human rights.
 - b. This is especially critical as we anticipate a gradual move to a more decentralized technology landscape that, as we discussed earlier, presents many more challenges for tracking and stopping financial abuse.
 - c. Government should ensure better training at the state and local levels to better enable detection of fraud that could have federal implications.
4. Government should **increase the number and quality of cryptocurrency data sources** available for public consumption and analysis.
- a. For example, the FRED data service currently only includes exchange rates and only for five cryptocurrencies. What if FRED included transaction data, information about ownership of addresses and mixing services, and cryptocurrency tracing and visualization tools? The FRED cryptocurrency exchange data was initially obtained from Coinbase, and these new data and resources could be similarly acquired from private industry if necessary.
 - b. There should be a government-wide initiative to share and coordinate data on cryptocurrency, which is made a priority by nominating a high-level position and coordination center, at the NSC and with Treasury, to function as a central coordination node.

5. Congress should **enact the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act**, which would establish offices within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of Justice, and the FBI to monitor, investigate, and prosecute cases of domestic terrorism – and require these offices to regularly report to Congress. Passed by the House of Representatives, but blocked by a Republican filibuster in the Senate, this legislation would also provide resources to strengthen partnerships with state and local law enforcement authorities to confront far-right extremism and create an interagency task force to explore white supremacist activities within the U.S. armed services and federal law enforcement.

6. Government should **promote anti-bias education programs that help steer individuals away from hate and extremism**. The law is a blunt instrument to confront hate and extremism; it is much better to prevent these criminal acts in the first place. Since it is not possible to legislate, regulate, or tabulate racism, hatred, or extremism out of existence, we need federal and state government leadership to promote anti-bias, anti-hate, and democracy-building education programs – such as the SPLC’s Learning for Justice resources⁴⁰ – in our nation’s schools. Especially in these divided and polarized times, every elementary and secondary school should promote an inclusive school climate and activities that celebrate our nation’s diversity.
 - a. Programs and processes that intervene ethically in the lives of individuals – often called “deradicalization” efforts – should also be promoted. More than 70 million children and young adults, for example, have been learning primarily at home. They experienced a summer vacation with no camps, employment, or other structured activities. Extremists and hate groups see this as an ideal time to exploit youth grievances about their lack of agency, their families’ economic distress, and their intense sense of disorientation, confusion, fear, and anxiety. In the absence of their usual social support systems and networks of trusted adults and peers, young people can become targets of far-right extremists, who promise easy answers online about who they can blame for their plight.
 - b. Last June, SPLC and American University’s Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL)⁴¹ released a guide to help parents and caregivers understand how extremists are exploiting this time of uncertainty and unrest by targeting children and young adults with propaganda. The guide, *Building Resilience & Confronting Risk in the COVID-19 Era*,⁴² is designed for caregivers, parents, educators, and others who are on the front lines of recognizing and responding to radicalization in the COVID-19 era.

⁴⁰ <https://www.splcenter.org/learning-for-justice>

⁴¹ Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL), American University, <https://www.american.edu/centers/university-excellence/peril.cfm>.

⁴² “Building Resilience & Confronting Risk in the COVID-19 Era: A Parents & Caregivers Guide to Online Radicalization,” Southern Poverty Law Center/American University’s Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL), https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/splc_peril_covid_parents_guide_jan_2021_1.pdf.

Our new SPLC/PERIL guide provides parents and caregivers with tangible steps to confront and counter this threat.

Thank you for holding this important hearing. We deeply appreciate the Committee's continued leadership in working to address the financing of domestic terrorism and extremism in a constitutional and effective manner. We look forward to working with you as you continue to focus your urgent attention on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MEH', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Michael Edison Hayden
Senior Investigative Reporter/Spokesperson
Intelligence Project

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Megan Squire'.

Megan Squire, Ph.D.
Deputy Director for Data Analytics and OSINT
Intelligence Project