

Report on Government Take-Down Requests

RESOLVED:

Shareholders request that Verizon Communications Inc. (“Company”) provide a report, published on the company’s website and updated semi-annually – and omitting proprietary information and at reasonable cost – that specifies the Company’s policy in responding to requests to remove or take down content, or content-producing entities, from its platforms by the Executive Office of the President, Members of Congress, or any other agency or entity of the United States Government.

This report shall also include an itemized listing of such take-down requests, including the name and title of the official making the request; the nature and scope of the request; the date of the request; the outcome of the request; and a reason or rationale for the Company’s response, or lack thereof.

SUPPORTING STATEMENT:

In *Bantam Books, Inc. vs. Sullivan (1963)*, and in other cases, the Supreme Court of the United States has ruled that private entities may not engage in suppression of speech at the behest of government, as it has the same effect as direct government censorship.

On July 15, 2021, White House press secretary Jen Psaki was asked, “Can you talk a little bit more about this request for tech companies to be more aggressive in policing misinformation? Has the administration been in touch with any of these companies and are there any actions that the federal government can take to ensure their cooperation, because we’ve seen, from the start, there’s not a lot of action on some of these platforms.”

Psaki replied, “Sure. Well, first, we are in regular touch with these social media platforms, and those engagements typically happen through members of our senior staff, but also members of our COVID-19 team, given, as (Surgeon General) Dr. (Vivek) Murthy conveyed, this is a big issue of misinformation, specifically on the pandemic.”

Circumstantial evidence shows that the Company may have been the recipient of overtures, possibly from government, to censor. For example:

- A presidential campaign’s text-messaging system to voters, controlled by the Company, was shut down at a critical time during the 2020 election¹
- Two top members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee wrote the Company asking if it still intended to carry television networks that broadcast so-called “misinformation”²

¹ Isenstadt, Alex & Hendel, John. “Corporate giants shut down Trump texting program,” Politico, July 20, 2020. See <https://politi.co/3SM0VCw>.

² Shepardson, David. “U.S. lawmakers ask video providers to address misinformation by TV channels,” Reuters, Feb. 22, 2021. See <https://reut.rs/3fkch3a>.

- After pressure from public officials, the Company removed TV network OAN from its channel lineup³

Shareholders need to know whether the Company cooperates with government officials engaged in unconstitutional censorship, opening the Company to liability claims by victims. Shareholders also need to know whether the Company fails to disclose these potential liabilities as material risks in its public filings.

³ Gans, Jared. "OAN officially dropped by Verizon, its last major carrier," *The Hill*, July 21, 2022. See <https://bit.ly/3FrE1gD>.