Nov 20, 2017

Michael Beckerman
President & CEO
Internet Association
1333 H Street NW
12TH Floor, West Tower
Washington DC 20005

Dear Mr. Beckerman,

As AI technology continues to expand and touch all areas of our lives, from social media, medicine, traffic management, airport security, retail inventory, to online lending, and education, it is imperative that policy makers carefully attempt to balance policies and regulations that mitigate social and ethical risks while providing an environment that allows for and supports innovation in industries such as yours. To that extent, we need to gain a better understanding of policy decisions that associations such as yours which your website describes as the only trade association that exclusively represents leading global internet companies on matters of public policy, are working through on a day-to-day basis.

To date, internet companies have operated with great freedoms. We have relied on industry actors to police themselves, and it has now become apparent that this strategy is no longer sufficient. During these last few months it has been troubling to learn that the internet industry has become a platform where people feel comfortable to share violent, racist sentiments. Sentiments ultimately leading to the type of violence that we witnessed in August 2017 at the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. We are disturbed by the ease in which bad actors were able to target and manipulate technical platforms to exacerbate racial tension and ultimately threaten our Democracy.

Considering the recent announcements from several social media companies on the intrusion and influence of foreign actors on their platforms, we are concerned that racial and gender bias will continue to propagate throughout the internet in advertising, algorithm development, data selection and other methods unless conscious and concrete steps are taken by the industry.

We are writing to request that you review and provide an overview of your association's processes, specifically:
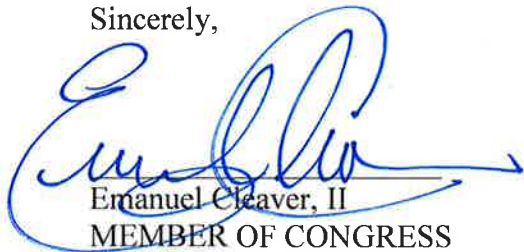
- Is there a process in your association to review, test, share, and manage member datasets, algorithms or products to ensure that there is not a gender, racial, or religious bias?
- Has the Internet Association implemented any best practices to limit the proliferation of discriminatory biases and/or radical ideology to spread of racism, and gender bias?
- Do you have a process and/or platform where you can educate the public and your members on how to spot, identify and notify you of such content?
- What is your policy for data governance/ oversight, transparency and auditability?
- Is there an established encryption policy to protect against unwanted access to this data?
- How do you distribute updated policy guidelines or alerts to your members?

As AI is leading to autonomy these issues of ethics, safety, racial and gender bias, knowledge sharing, and privacy are at a critical point. It is imperative that internet member associations such as yours which have enjoyed great freedoms to date to allow for innovation, understand the seriousness of this spread of racism, sexism, and bigotry on the internet and its threat to our Democracy.
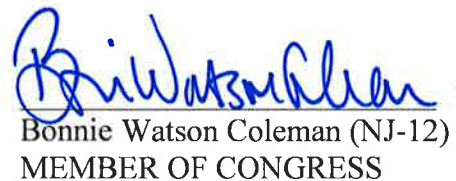
We call on you to hold your members responsible for stopping the spread of racial and gender bias where they can and urge you to adopt best practices and policies to hold these members accountable with consequences.

If these issues go unchecked Congress will be left with few options and will demand increased regulations to address these issues.

Sincerely,

Emanuel Cleaver, II
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Bonnie Watson Coleman (NJ-12)
MEMBER OF CONGRESS