Apple removes Parler from the App Store

Apple has removed Parler from the App Store, following accusations that the social media app was fostering calls to violence ahead of, and following, the raid on the US Capitol.

“We have always supported diverse points of view being represented on the App Store, but there is no place on our platform for threats of violence and illegal activity. Parler has not taken adequate measures to address the proliferation of these threats to people’s safety. We have suspended Parler from the App Store until they resolve these issues,” reads a statement from the company on Saturday evening.

Apple issued an ultimatum to Parler on Friday demanding that it remove content in violation with its policies and provide a plan on how it would moderate content moving forward, which was first reported by *BuzzFeed News*. Apple said Parler had 24 hours to make the changes or else it would be removed from the App Store.

Apparently, Parler did propose some changes, but Apple decided they weren’t sufficient, according to a statement Apple sent to Parler alongside its final decision to remove the app. It states that “the processes Parler has put in place to moderate or prevent the spread of dangerous and illegal content have proved insufficient,” and that Parler will not return to the App Store until it has “demonstrated your ability to effectively moderate and filter the dangerous and harmful content on your service.”

Here’s the full statement as provided by Apple:

To the developers of the Parler app,

Thank you for your response regarding dangerous and harmful content on Parler. We have determined that the measures you describe are inadequate to address the proliferation of dangerous and objectionable content on your app.

Parler has not upheld its commitment to moderate and remove harmful or dangerous content encouraging violence and illegal activity, and is not in compliance with the App Store Review Guidelines.

In your response, you referenced that Parler has been taking this content "very seriously for weeks." However, the processes Parler has put in place to moderate or prevent the spread of dangerous and illegal content have proved insufficient. Specifically, we have continued to find direct threats of violence and calls to incite lawless action in violation of Guideline 1.1 – Safety – Objectionable Content.

Your response also references a moderation plan "for the time being," which does not meet the ongoing requirements in Guideline 1.2 – Safety – User Generated content. While there is no perfect system to prevent all dangerous or hateful user content, apps are required to have robust content moderation plans in place to proactively and effectively address these issues. A temporary "task force" is not a sufficient response given the widespread proliferation of harmful content.

For these reasons, your app will be removed from the App Store until we receive an update that is compliant with the App Store Review Guidelines and you have demonstrated your ability to effectively moderate and filter the dangerous and harmful content on your service.

Regards, App Review Board

The app was briefly still available on Apple's store after we

received the statement, but it disappeared from the store a number of minutes after we published this post. As *TechCrunch* reported earlier today, the app jumped up to #1 on the App Store and may have gained hundreds of thousands of users between the time Apple issued its 24-hour ultimatum and when the company pulled it down.

Google pulled Parler Friday evening. “We’re aware of continued posting in the Parler app that seeks to incite ongoing violence in the US,” Google said in a statement. “We recognize that there can be reasonable debate about content policies and that it can be difficult for apps to immediately remove all violative content, but for us to distribute an app through Google Play, we do require that apps implement robust moderation for egregious content. In light of this ongoing and urgent public safety threat, we are suspending the app’s listings from the Play Store until it addresses these issues.”

Both Apple and Google faced pressure on Friday to deplatform Parler, which is known for being conservative-friendly and having less stringent moderation than other social media platforms. The removal of both apps comes after a mob attack Wednesday on the US Capitol by pro-Trump rioters. On Friday, Amy Piekoff, head of policy at Parler, told *Fox News* a ban from the App Store would be “huge,” adding that if it Apple removed Parler “we’re toast.”

Parler did not immediately respond to a request for comment Saturday. CEO John Matze posted a statement on Parler accusing Apple of applying a “horrible double standard” in its decision.

“Apple, Google and the rest of the anti-competitive pack of big tech tyrants coordinate their moves and work together to stifle competition in the marketplace,” he wrote. Matze added more details would be coming soon about Parler’s plans “as we have many options.”

Update January 9th, 8:58PM ET: *Added statement from Parler CEO*

https://www.theverge.com/2021/1/9/22221730/apple-removes-suspends-bans-parler-app-store