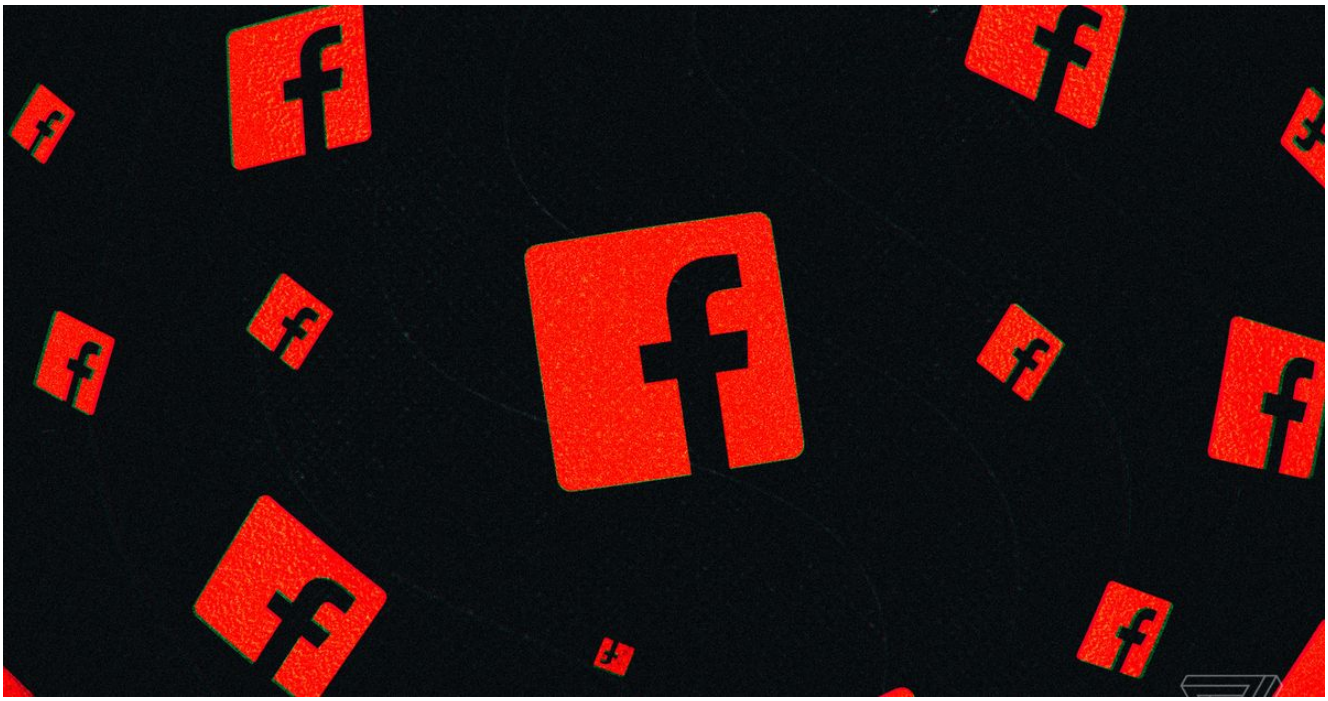
# Facebook reportedly removed strikes from conservative pages after executive intervened



Facebook reportedly cleared misinformation “strikes” against several posts by conservatives in an apparent attempt to prevent them from being banned, *BuzzFeed News* reported.

A Facebook employee reported that Joel Kaplan, the company’s vice president of global public policy, flagged for review an Instagram post from conservative commentator Charlie Kirk that had earned a “partly false” rating from a third-party fact-checker, according to *BuzzFeed News*. The same employee also noticed misinformation strikes against conservative website Breitbart had been “cleared without explanation,” although it was not clear whether Kaplan or another person was involved in that decision.

“It appears that policy people have been intervening in fact-checks on behalf of *exclusively* right-wing publishers to

avoid them getting repeat-offender status," another Facebook employee wrote in an internal policy discussion group, per *BuzzFeed News*. Such interventions by Facebook executives in its fact-checking process would violate the company's official policy, which stipulates that a publisher that wants to appeal a fact-check rating has to contact the fact-checker responsible, not Facebook directly.

Kaplan was believed to be partly responsible for Facebook's policy on political ads, in which the company has opted not to fact-check the content in political advertisements. He also was reportedly involved in removing a "partly false" fact-check label from an article on the conservative site *Daily Wire*.

He's also known for supporting longtime friend Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh during the justice's contentious confirmation process, to the dismay of many at Facebook.

A Facebook spokesperson said in an email to *The Verge* on Thursday that the platform defers to third-party fact-checkers on content ratings, and when one of the fact-checkers adds a rating, Facebook applies a label and demotion.

"But we are responsible for how we manage our internal systems for repeat offenders," the spokesperson continued. "We apply additional system wide penalties for multiple false ratings, including demonetization and the inability to advertise, unless we determine that one or more of those ratings does not warrant additional consequences."

The spokesperson added that Facebook partners with more than 70 fact-checking organizations "to apply fact-checks to millions of pieces of content."

Facebook introduced its fact-checking program in the aftermath of the 2016 elections, enlisting independent fact-checking groups to help stem the spread of misinformation on the platform. It rolled out the fact-checking program on Instagram

last year. Since 2016, the program has expanded and Facebook has broadened its scope to include groups, where misinformation is frequently shared. Breitbart was among one of Facebook's "trusted news" partners when the social media platform introduced its News tab last year.

The fact-checking program had mixed results, however, with early partners Snopes and ABC parting ways. And *The Guardian* reported in 2018 that barely two years in, the fact-checking program already was in "disarray" amid complaints Facebook wasn't taking the process seriously enough.

But the fact-checking program can limit an article's visibility on the platform, and a site that repeatedly posts false information should — at least in theory — see its rating within Facebook's algorithm negatively affected.

Facebook workers told *BuzzFeed* they feared for their jobs if they spoke out against the company, citing the case of one engineer who gathered multiple examples of other Facebook employees — which included some on the policy team — intervening on behalf of conservative figures. The engineer was apparently terminated for violating a "respectful communication policy." His co-workers described the fired engineer as "a conscience of this company, and a tireless voice for us doing the right thing."

https://www.theverge.com/2020/8/6/21357663/facebook-removed-strikes-conservative-fact-checking-banned-breitbart