Google’s CEO had to remind Congress that Google doesn’t make iPhones



In any congressional hearing about technology, at least a few lawmakers will use Silicon Valley executives as their own personal tech support staff. But usually, the questions at least involve products that their companies actually make. So Google CEO Sundar Pichai got particularly unlucky at a hearing in the House Judiciary Committee today, when Rep. Steve King (R-IA) asked Pichai to explain why his daughter’s iPhone was acting strangely.

“I have a seven-year-old granddaughter who picked up her phone during the election, and she’s playing a little game, the kind of game a kid would play,” King told Pichai. “And up on there pops a picture of her grandfather. And I’m not going to say into the record what kind of language was used around that picture of her grandfather, but I’d ask you: how does that show up on a seven-year-old’s iPhone, who’s playing a kid’s game?”

Pichai hesitated. “Congressman, the iPhone is made by a different company. And so, you know, I mean…”

King, undeterred, decided that the brand of the phone wasn’t really important. “It might have been an Android. It’s just, it was a hand-me-down of some kind,” he said.

Unable to explain why a secondhand phone potentially made by a competing company would have displayed a random notification, Pichai offered to get back to the lawmaker. “You know, I’m happy to follow up when I understand the specifics. There may be an application which was being used which had a notification. But I’m happy to understand it better and clarify it for you.”

It’s not clear what King was referring to, but it’s possible his granddaughter’s iPhone (or possibly Android phone) was displaying a notification card about a news story. The language around his photo may forever remain a mystery, but during campaign season, there was no shortage of writers with strong feelings about King’s numerous racist and anti-immigrant statements, or his endorsement of a Canadian white nationalist mayoral candidate. In any case, during the hearing, King also suggested that Congress should check Google employees’ social media profiles to monitor their political leanings — so some confusing troubleshooting requests were probably the least of Pichai’s worries.

https://www.theverge.com/2018/12/11/18136377/google-sundar-pichai-steve-king-hearing-granddaughter-iphone-android-notification