

Social Media Platform Parler Removed from Apple and Google's App Stores

Parler, the social media platform that's become popular among conservatives in recent months, has been removed from both major mobile application marketplaces for failing to adequately moderate content on its app.

Google delisted the app from its Google Play store Friday evening, explaining that the company requires all apps to "implement robust moderation for egregious content." Apple, meanwhile, gave Parler a 24-hour warning Friday before removing the app from its App Store on Saturday night.

In a statement, Apple said that, while the company has "always supported diverse viewpoints," Parler had not done enough to curb "threats of violence and illegal activity" on its platform. The company added that Parler is suspended "until they resolve these issues."

In an email to Parler, Apple's App Review Board told the app's developers that "Parler has not upheld its commitment to moderate and remove harmful or dangerous content encouraging violence and illegal activity."

Parler had no immediate comment on the suspension Saturday night.

Update: Amazon also took decisive action against Parler on Saturday. In an email obtained by BuzzFeed News, Amazon Web Services told Parler that it has seen "a steady increase in...violent content on your website" and would no longer

provide its Web hosting services.

According to BuzzFeed, Parler will go offline Monday unless it can find a new web host.

AWS said it “cannot provide services to a customer that is unable to effectively identify and remove content that encourages or incites violence against others,” according to the email, adding that Parler “poses a very real risk to public safety.” Amazon declined comment Saturday evening, other than to refer a reporter to the contents of the letter included in the BuzzFeed report.

Membership on Parler had surged in recent months, attracting 8 million users as of November, and the platform soared to the App Store’s top 10 free apps. It had been No. 1 on Saturday, after news spread of its imminent suspension.

But the app wasn’t just a haven for “free speech,” as it billed itself. It was also a largely unmoderated hotbed of misinformation and hate speech.

It was also one of the platforms used for organizing Wednesday’s insurrection in Washington, D.C., in which pro-Trump rioters stormed the Capitol Building as Congress was attempting to certify the results of the presidential election. However, Parler CEO John Matze told The New York Times this week that he didn’t “feel responsible for any of this and neither should the platform, considering we’re a neutral town square that just adheres to the law.”

While the president does not currently have an active account on Parler, perhaps he may soon—that is, if he has already downloaded it. Trump has been temporarily suspended from Facebook, Snapchat and Twitch and, on Friday, Twitter permanently banned him from its platform, which has been instrumental in his political career and presidency.

Twitter also banned numerous far-right accounts this week in

the wake of Wednesday's chaos, including pro-Trump lawyers Lin Wood and Sidney Powell and a brigade of other QAnon conspiracy peddlers. The mainstream social media companies, which had been extremely reluctant to punish Trump for rule-breaking posts during his political ascent and first three years in office, struck a different tone in 2020 with the Covid-19 pandemic raging, mass protests for racial justice and an election cycle that was full of disinformation.

Many conservatives, including Republican politicians, have complained about perceived bias against them, though there is no major evidence to support their allegations. Parler and other services, like Gab, have popped up in recent years to provide conservative alternatives to Facebook and Twitter—but those platforms have largely been overrun with users testing the limits of what constitutes “free speech” online. (Apple rejected Gab's application to appear in its App Store, while Google removed it from the Play store in 2017.)

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