US government website used Chinese model the FBI called “malicious”

On Wednesday, US government officials removed a Chinese AI search tool that was briefly deployed on the Federal Register website, Reuters reported.

The change came after social media users noticed an apparent contradiction: The National Archives was using one of Alibaba’s Qwen AI models, even as top US law enforcement claimed that such models illegally copy US frontier models. Earlier this month, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) named Alibaba among six leading Chinese firms allegedly conducting “industrial-scale distillation” that the agency says is helping America’s biggest competitor cut costs and development time in the race for global AI leadership.

It’s unclear when exactly the National Archives, which runs the Federal Register website, began offering visitors the option to use a Qwen model to search public comments on proposed regulations. So far, the independent agency tasked with increasing public access to federal government documents has not commented on the removal and did not respond to Ars’ request for comment. The White House and the FBI have also not commented.

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https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/09/us-government-website-used-chinese-model-the-fbi-called-malicious/

California may gut state net neutrality law to comply with Trump admin demand

California is on the verge of accepting $1.86 billion in federal broadband grant funds, despite the Trump administration telling states they cannot enforce net neutrality rules on any Internet service provider that gets a piece of the grant money.

When the Trump administration overhauled the $42 billion Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program last year, it ruled that states must agree not to enforce any rate regulation or net neutrality rule on ISPs that receive funding. This is particularly problematic for California, which previously won a yearslong court battle to defend its state net neutrality law.

Similar to federal net neutrality rules repealed during the first Trump administration, California's law prohibits ISPs from blocking or throttling lawful traffic and says ISPs may not require fees from websites or online services to deliver or prioritize their traffic to Internet users. While the first Trump administration lost its attempt to preempt state net neutrality laws, the second Trump administration is trying to achieve a similar result by making federal broadband money conditional on whether states agree not to enforce net neutrality.

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https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/09/california-may-gut-state-net-neutrality-law-to-comply-with-trump-admin-demand/

It’s OK to tell ICE their actions will haunt them, judge rules in speech fight

It’s not illegal to send an email telling Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials that their actions will haunt them, a federal judge ruled Tuesday, granting a preliminary injunction that blocks ICE from threatening to prosecute a critic for protected speech.

Back in January, David Streever sent a scathing three-paragraph email to then-acting director of ICE, Todd Lyons. Outraged by the killings of two Minnesota protestors against ICE, Renee Good and Alex Pretti, Streever told Lyons that he was a “monstrous human being” who will eat himself “alive with shame” for defending officers who shot people who posed no threat and had no weapons. Comparing Lyons to an infamous high-ranking Nazi cop, Streever predicted that “even Trump” would one day turn on Lyons for defending the “obvious” slayings of Americans.

David Streever’s email to ICE. Credit: via FIRE

“You are a monstrous human being and will go down in history as America’s Reinhard Heydrich, the butcher,” Streever wrote. “You will never know peace. You will seek to lose yourself, to escape the burden of knowing the truth about yourself. But wherever you go, you will find yourself. You will torment yourself until your last day on Earth.”

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Boston dumps Flock, says it shared data nationwide in violation of contract

“An EFF analysis of ALPR search logs from Flock Safety systems shows that officers across the country are spying on drivers for completely nonsensical ‘reasons,’” the EFF wrote. “Police are routinely searching the Flock database without providing any legitimate justification, making a mockery of our civil liberties by logging reasons like ‘LOL’ (short for ‘laugh out loud’), ‘LMAO’ (short for ‘laughing my ass off’), ‘sexy,’ and ‘idk’ (short for ‘I don’t know’) to access sensitive ALPR location data.”

The EFF wrote that “Flock Safety claims it has improved its system by requiring officers to select from a dropdown list of crimes before running a search,” but the new system in place since late 2025 “does not require proof that the dropdown reason actually matches the true purpose of the search.”

Boston will keep using cameras, just not Flock’s

When asked if the city will keep using license-plate cameras as long as there are appropriate constraints, Wu replied, “Yes, we need a publicly approved and authorized policy to guarantee all of those protections, privacy, civil liberties, and if that’s in place, then we should deploy technology to be able to keep people safe and solve crimes faster.”

Boston’s annual report said the city requires vendors to agree not to share license-plate-reader data and to erase recordings after 30 days unless police request that video be retained for legal or investigative purposes.

“The police department has been piloting different versions [of the technology] to better understand where vehicles might be going,” Wu said. City officials need to “know exactly who can access that data, how it will be retained, how long will it be saved for,” she said.

“It can really help with safety in a lot of ways, but it has to be used responsibly,” Wu said. “When the toggles or the access controls either are not able to be restricted in the ways that conform with that policy, or are set but then can be unset or reset in ways that violate that policy, we would not use that platform.”

As we wrote last month, cities have been dropping Flock at an accelerating pace “over concerns regarding out-of-control surveillance, unwanted data sharing, high expenses, and reports of police abusing the tool.” However, the company told Ars at the time that, “so far in 2026, new city partnerships have outpaced nonrenewals by approximately 10 to 1.” We contacted Flock today about the Boston city report and will update this article if it provides a response.

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/09/boston-dumps-flock-says-it-shared-data-nationwide-in-violation-of-contract/

Trump EPA moves to wipe out

climate rules for power plants

On the heels of the hottest summer on record and a United Nations report warning that global temperatures are likely to push climate risks to “increasingly dangerous heights,” the Trump administration overturned most of a Biden-era rule limiting climate pollution from power plants, the second-largest source of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Environmental Protection Agency announced a final plan Monday that guts the 2024 Carbon Pollution Standards, which the agency said exceeds its authority under the Clean Air Act by requiring control technologies “that are not adequately demonstrated.” The agency also proposed revoking “all remaining GHG emissions requirements for power plants,” arguing their emissions “have no material impact on climate change.”

The plan to revoke the Carbon Pollution Standards was initially revealed last spring.

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https://arstechnica.com/science/2026/09/epa-seeks-to-eliminate-remaining-greenhouse-gas-rules-for-power-plants/

Trump’s forced coal plant

extensions thrown out by judge

The use of coal to generate electricity on the US grid has been plunging for nearly two decades, and the first Trump administration was unable to affect the trend. So his second administration has attempted more aggressive interventions to prop up coal use. One of its most direct means of doing so is to order coal plants that were scheduled to close to remain open, even if there is no need for them.

The administration's justification for these orders is a statute that allows the Department of Energy (DOE) to declare an emergency in the case of wartime or a sudden shortfall in generation. A number of parties, including states where coal plants have been slated to close, have challenged this declaration. And on Friday, in the first of these cases to make its way through the courts, the declaration was judged to be contrary to the statute. While this only affects a single coal plant in Michigan, the reasoning of the decision will apply to every coal plant closure that has been blocked by the DOE.

No emergency

The decision was issued by a unanimous three-judge panel from the DC Circuit's Court of Appeals. It focuses on the J.H. Campbell Generating Plant, which was scheduled to close last year but has been kept open by a total of five emergency declarations by the DOE, each limited to 90 days by the Federal Power Act. At issue was section 202(c) of that Act, which allows the DOE to declare emergencies when the US is at war or when "an emergency exists by reason of a sudden increase in the demand for electric energy, or a shortage of electric energy."

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https://arstechnica.com/science/2026/09/court-rejects-governments-energy-emergency-that-kept-coal-plant-open/

ChatGPT-using lawyer punished for citing fake testimony from made-up witnesses

The New Mexico Supreme Court held a ChatGPT-using lawyer in direct contempt of court for submitting a brief with “false testimony from wholly fabricated witnesses,” including fake police testimony and other mistakes. The state’s top court referred the lawyer to a disciplinary board for further proceedings and concluded that he “demonstrated a lack of remorse and a lack of concern for his client.”

Attorney Stephen Aarons “admitted to the Court that he did not verify the factual claims and legal authority in his AI-generated brief before signing it and filing it with the Court, and that he did not inform his client of this failure or that the brief in chief contained multiple factual and legal misrepresentations,” the state Supreme Court said in an order on Wednesday.

Aarons has been a criminal defense lawyer in New Mexico for over 40 years and was hired by a defendant’s family members to appeal a murder conviction. Aaron’s now-former client, Oscar Renee Sandoval, was sentenced to life in prison in February 2025 after being convicted of killing Shiereen Al-Jibury, who

was his partner and the mother of his children.

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LinkedIn beats “BrowserGate” lawsuits over scanning users’ Chrome extensions

LinkedIn beat two lawsuits over its practice of scanning users’ browser extensions, with a judge granting the Microsoft subsidiary’s motion to dismiss the cases. The users who sued LinkedIn failed to adequately allege that they have standing to sue because neither asserted that they “had browser extensions installed that conveyed private information to LinkedIn,” ruled Judge Vince Chhabria in US District Court for the Northern District of California.

In his ruling on Tuesday, Chhabria gave the plaintiffs leave to amend their complaints but said he doubts they can make a plausible case. “Given LinkedIn’s further arguments that users voluntarily download browser extensions, which by their nature intentionally expose data to websites, it seems unlikely that the plaintiffs will ever be able to allege a privacy violation, much less prevail at the end of the day,” Chhabria wrote.

California residents Nicholas Farrell and Jeff Ganan separately filed class actions against LinkedIn in April,

seeking to represent themselves and other LinkedIn users. Ganan’s attorney, J.R. Howell, said he is evaluating whether to bring the claims in a California state court, which has different requirements on standing, or to appeal the US district court ruling in the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

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https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/09/linkedin-beats-browsergate-lawsuits-over-scanning-users-chrome-extensions/

Panic builds over bankrupt Spirit’s looming data sale to Google

Doug Kreuzkamp was shocked when news outlets reported that Google won an auction to buy a huge amount of operational data as part of Spirit Airlines’ bankruptcy proceedings.

Kreuzkamp founded a startup called Springshot in 2011, which created a widely used proprietary platform that helps humans and AI systems improve airline efficiency and quickly solve logistics problems so flights can stay on time and airlines can operate as smoothly as possible. Hundreds of airports use it globally.

Springshot powered Spirit’s technology stack for the last three years, right up to the “very last flight,” Kreuzkamp told Ars. Yet his company got no notice when Spirit prepared to auction off a massive dataset that he thinks likely

improperly includes a substantial amount of data and intellectual property (IP) that Springshot owns—not Spirit.

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https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/09/panic-builds-over-bankrupt-spirits-looming-data-sale-to-google/

Kimmel’s ABC show won’t air interview with Democrat because of Trump FCC threats

ABC’s Jimmy Kimmel said he will be interviewing a Democratic candidate for Senate tonight, but the interview will be on YouTube only and not broadcast on TV because of threats made by the Federal Communications Commission.

Kimmel has been a prime target in the Trump FCC’s attacks on ABC and its owner, Disney. In his monologue last night, Kimmel said he’ll be interviewing Democrat James Talarico, a state representative who is running against Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton for a seat in the US Senate.

In previous years, such an interview would have aired on the broadcast show via local stations throughout the country, Kimmel said. This time, it will only be on the *Jimmy Kimmel Live* YouTube channel in order to prevent further trouble for individual stations that hold FCC licenses, he said.

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