Upon Further Review, Facebook Will Label Politicians' Posts That Violate Its Rules

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Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg is taking a page out of the Twitter handbook, revealing during a Facebook Live video Friday afternoon that the social network will begin labeling content from elected officials that it deems newsworthy, but that would otherwise violate its policies.

Zuckerberg explained in a separate post that this occurs "a handful of times a year," and that seeing speech from politicians is often in the public interest, and that content will be allowed to remain on its platform as long as the public interest value outweighs the risk of harm.

This marks a shift from his comments late last month, in the wake of President Donald Trump's now-infamous "When the looting starts, the shooting starts" social post.

Twitter chose to allow the tweet to remain accessible, while placing it behind a label indicating that it violated the platform's rules against glorifying violence.

Facebook, meanwhile, allowed the post to remain live as-is, with Zuckerberg saying at the time that it did not violate the social network's policies, writing in a Facebook post in the late hours of May 29, "Unlike Twitter, we do not have a policy of putting a warning in front of posts that may incite violence because we believe that if a post incites violence, it should be removed regardless of whether it is newsworthy,

even if it comes from a politician."

Zuckerberg said during his livestream Friday that there will be no exceptions for content that glorifies violence or is intended to suppress voting, adding, "We're going to take that content down, no matter who says it. There are no exceptions for politicians in any of the policies I'm announcing here today."

Zuckerberg wrote in his post that people will be allowed to share content that is labeled in this fashion in order "to condemn it, just like we do with other problematic content," but they will see a prompt informing them that the content may violate its policies.

Free Press co-CEO Jessica J. González weighed in, saying in a statement, "Facebook must understand that enabling the spread of hate speech comes at a huge financial cost. The country is changing. We're at a pivotal moment in the fight for the rights of Black and Brown people. Unless Facebook changes and takes crucial steps to curtail the spread of racism and bigotry, it will continue to suffer consequences."

#StopHateForProfit, the push for advertisers to boycott Facebook, counts Free Press among its organizers, along with the Anti-Defamation League, Color of Change, Common Sense Media, the NAACP and Sleeping Giants.

And that push is working, as several brands have committed to various degrees. A list, which will be updated as needed, is available here.

The bulk of Zuckerberg's appearance on Facebook Live was devoted to the upcoming presidential election in the U.S., and he said, "The 2020 elections were already shaping up to be incredibly heated before we faced the complexities of a pandemic and racial injustice."

He expanded on last week's news that Facebook was embarking on

the “largest voter information campaign in American history,” with plans to register 4 million people prior to Election Day (Nov. 3) by outlining steps the company is taking to provide authoritative information on the process.

Zuckerberg noted that Covid-19 brings the extra challenge of potentially scaring people away from going to the polls, making accurate information even more vital.

A Voting Information Center will appear at the top of Facebook’s News Feed and Instagram’s feed, directing users to information on how and where to vote, including voting by mail and early voting.

The Voting Information Center will also contain links to posts that discuss voting, including posts from politicians, with Zuckerberg adding that including these posts is not a judgment on their accuracy, but an attempt to share authoritative information.

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