

White House launches tool for social media censorship complaints

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The White House launched a [tool](#) on Wednesday that will allow any U.S. citizen to submit a complaint if they think they were unfairly censored on social media platforms.

Why it matters: Social media bias has become a [major talking point](#) for President Trump and conservatives who argue that Silicon Valley companies are biased against their viewpoints.

Be smart: This attitude demonstrates a complete reversal of the president's stance toward social media platforms since he was inaugurated in 2017.

- At that time, the president told Axios that he liked platforms like Twitter and Facebook because they allowed him to reach voters in an unrestricted way, unlike the mainstream media.
- Today, Trump uses Twitter as his main communications vehicle, often sending dozens of tweets in a single day.

Details: The new form begins by asking users to submit basic information about themselves, like their first and last names. It then asks users if they are citizens.

- If a user clicks "yes," the form continues. If a user clicks "no," a screen pops up saying: "Unfortunately, we can't gather your response through this form. Please feel free to contact us at [WhiteHouse.gov/contact](https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact)."
- The tool asks users to click which platform they've experienced bias on: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube or Other. It asks users to link to the suspected post and post a screenshot from the platform, if applicable, of the rule violation notification.

Skeptics were quick to point out that the online form was not very sophisticated and could be easily gamed by anyone who wanted to troll the administration.

- For example, the "captcha" response test used at the end of the survey to determine if the respondent is a bot asks users to type the year the Declaration of Independence was signed.
- "I tried it with '1945,' it cleared it. You just need to type four numbers," [tweeted](#) Quentin Hardy, head of editorial at Google Cloud.

Between the lines: The White House says the tool is meant to help people share stories about ways they were unfairly targeted by social platforms for free speech, but the online form where users can submit requests also appears to be an email collection mechanism.

- "We want to keep you posted on President Trump's fight for free speech," the form states after a few questions. "Can we add you to our email newsletters so we can update you without relying on platforms like Facebook and Twitter?"

Our thought bubble: The move is yet another example of ways the administration has chosen to tackle issues unilaterally, as opposed to working with bigger institutions or bodies to enact change.

- The White House launched the tool just hours after it [broke with](#) more than a dozen world leaders and top technology companies in an international call to action around the rise of online extremism on social platforms.