

U.S. Senator: The more we learn, the 'creepier' Facebook and Google become



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Republican Senator Josh Hawley has made taking on big tech one of his top priorities during his first few months in office.

The freshman senator from Missouri has introduced [bipartisan legislation](#) to protect children’s privacy online, grilled Google about its data collection, and slammed the FTC for its “toothless” response to Facebook and Google privacy scandals.

‘Creepy, weird, or sinister’

On Thursday, the Department of Housing and Urban Development announced it

filed a lawsuit accusing Facebook of housing discrimination. HUD is also looking at the ad practices of Google and Twitter.

In an interview with Yahoo Finance, Hawley said Facebook needs to get the message that it's not above the law.

"It's a very, very serious set of charges and I think it just shows that the more we learn about these companies — whether it's Facebook, whether it's Google — the creepier they get, and the problem is, is the steady drip, drip, drip. You never quite get the full story from the company leadership when they're before this body or before the public in any way. And then we learned that they've been doing something else creepy or weird or sinister — and today's another example," said Hawley.

While Hawley noted he doesn't know the underlying facts of the case, he believes HUD acted deliberately and did not rush into the decision.

"I can say this as a former prosecutor, you can't let folks off the hook," said Hawley. "Just because they're Facebook doesn't mean that they don't have to comply with the same laws that everybody else does."

'The American people deserve some answers'

Hawley also wrote a [letter](#) to Google CEO Sundar Pichai on Thursday, a day after the executive's [unannounced](#) meeting with President Donald Trump.

In an [exchange with Hawley](#) on Capitol Hill earlier this month, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joseph Dunford, said Google's work in China was indirectly benefiting the Chinese military.

The president tweeted that he met with Pichai on Wednesday, and Pichai assured him he was "totally committed to the U.S. military, not the Chinese military."

Just met with [@SundarPichai](#), President of [@Google](#), who is obviously doing quite well. He stated strongly that he is totally committed to the U.S. Military, not the Chinese Military...

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [March 27, 2019](#)

In his letter, Hawley said Pichai should go on the record about Google's work in China.

"Why have they been prioritizing work and investments in China that we know at least indirectly benefit the Chinese regime and the Chinese military? Why has he been prioritizing those over working with our own Department of Defense? I mean, I'd like some answers. I think the American people deserve some

answers, so let's have him. He should make the statements publicly," said Hawley.

In a statement, a Google spokesperson said: "We were pleased to have productive conversations with the president about investing in the future of the American workforce, the growth of emerging technologies and our ongoing commitment to working with the U.S. government."

'Let's put everything on the table'

Big tech companies are facing increased scrutiny on Capitol Hill.

Several lawmakers have proposed data privacy rules and Senator Elizabeth Warren [has called](#) to break up Amazon, Facebook, and Google.

Hawley said he thinks there could be bipartisan agreement on at least data privacy regulation — but he's also concerned about the size and concentration of big tech companies.

"I think we need to look at pro-competitive measures. Those can come in a variety of forms. In some ways protecting privacy is itself a pro-competitive measure because it sort of breaks the logjam that Google and Facebook hold now over consumers' personal data," said Hawley.

When asked if he would support breaking up tech companies, Hawley told Yahoo Finance he's concerned about antitrust issues and wants to put "everything on the table."

"It's a difficult question because our antitrust law, frankly, is not really written to apply to these companies and the business models they've developed. So it's, it's difficult. And that's why I say, you know, let's explore, let's put everything on the table. I don't want to rule anything in or out, but I think we should be able to agree that we need competition in the market," said Hawley.