

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6301

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September 26, 2017

Mr. Lawrence E. Page
Co-Founder, Chief Executive Officer
Alphabet Inc.
1600 Amphitheatre Pkwy
Mountain View, CA 94043-1351

Dear Mr. Page,

The Committee on Science, Space, and Technology is continuing its oversight of what appears to be a concerted effort by the Russian government to influence the U.S. energy market. In light of Facebook's disclosure of over \$100,000 in social media advertising associated with Russian accounts focused on the disruption and influence of U.S. politics through social media, it is likely that Russia undertook a similar effort using social media to influence the U.S. energy market. To better understand the extent of Russia's involvement and influence, we request that Alphabet provide the Committee with information similar to what other social media platforms have provided the U.S. Senate regarding anti-immigration propaganda and advertising.¹ Specifically, the Committee is interested in any and all information Alphabet has regarding Russian entities purchasing anti-fracking or any anti-fossil fuel advertisements or promotions on any Alphabet affiliated entities.

Russia's meddling in the U.S. energy market is well documented in the public domain. U.S. presidential candidates, European officials, and the U.S. intelligence community have all publicly noted evidence of Russia and its government corporations funding a covert anti-fracking campaign to suppress the widespread adoption of fracking in Europe and the U.S. – all in an effort to safeguard the influence of the Russian oil and gas sector.² The *New York Times* reported, "Russia, as part of their sophisticated

¹ Scott Shane, *Purged Facebook Page Tied to the Kremlin Spread Anti-Immigrant Bile*, N.Y. TIMES (Sept. 12, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/12/us/politics/russia-facebook-election.html>; Ali Breland, *Twitter to give analysis of Russian activity to Congress*, THE HILL (Sept. 7, 2017), <http://thehill.com/policy/technology/349626-twitter-to-give-analysis-of-russian-activity-to-congress-report>; Scott Shane & Mike Isaac, *Facebook to Turn Over Russian-Linked Ads to Congress*, N.Y. TIMES (Sept. 21, 2017), <https://nyti.ms/2yg8qsqz>;

² Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Background to "Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Election": The Analytic Process and Cyber Incident Attribution* 8 (Jan. 6, 2017), https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ICA_2017_01.pdf (explaining the anti-fracking programming by RT

information and disinformation operations, engaged actively with so-called nongovernmental organizations – environmental organizations working against shale gas – to maintain dependence on imported Russian gas,” quoting Anders Fogh Rasmussen, then Secretary General of NATO.³ The desire for influence and power over the global energy market does not stop at the European borders as other officials have indicated the same scheme is unfolding in the U.S.

According to media outlets, a “U.S. intelligence community’s [Office of the Director of National Intelligence] report on Russian activities in the presidential election” details “clear evidence that the Kremlin is financing and choreographing anti-fracking propaganda in the United States.”⁴ The report found that “[*Russian Today News*] ran ‘anti-fracking programing, highlighting environmental issues and the impacts on public health,’ which is ‘likely reflective of the Russian government’s concern about the impact of fracking and the U.S. natural gas production on the global energy market and the potential challenges to [Russian energy companies’] profitability,” such as state-controlled Russian energy giant Gazprom.⁵ Other reports suggest that Russian funds have been funneled through off-shore corporations and passed on to U.S.-based environmental activist organizations with the intent to effect political change.⁶

Additionally, as further evidence of covert Russian attempts to spread propaganda in the United States, U.S. Department of Justice officials have demanded that the U.S. based affiliate of RT (formerly *Russian Today*), a Russian state-sponsored news agency, register as a foreign agent under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA).⁷ FARA

American TV – a Kremlin-financed channel operated from within the U.S.); Eric Roston, *Putin’s Other American Propaganda Effort: Anti-Fracking News*, BLOOMBERG (Jan. 9, 2017), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-01-10/putin-s-other-american-propaganda-effort-anti-fracking-news>; Michael Bastasch, *Hillary’s Leaked Speeches Confirm Russia Funded Anti-Fracking Groups*, DAILY CALLER (Oct. 10, 2016), <http://dailycaller.com/2016/10/10/hillarys-leaked-speeches-confirm-russia-funded-anti-fracking-groups/>; Fiona Harvey, *Russia ‘Secretly Working with Environmentalists to Oppose Fracking’*, THE GUARDIAN (Jun. 19, 2014), <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/jun/19/russia-secretly-working-with-environmentalists-to-oppose-fracking>.

³ Andrew Higgins, *Russian Money Suspected Behind Fracking Protests*, NY TIMES (Nov. 30, 2014), <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/01/world/russian-money-suspected-behind-fracking-protests.html>.

⁴ Drew Johnson, *Intelligence: Putin is Funding the Anti-Fracking Campaign*, NEWSWEEK (Jan. 29, 2017), <http://www.newsweek.com/intelligence-putin-funding-anti-fracking-campaign-547873>.

⁵ For extensive detail on the connections, see H. Comm. on Science, Space, & Tech. Subcomm. On Oversight, *Letter to Sec. Steven Mnuchin, U.S. Dep’t of Treasury: Kaspersky Lab*, 115th Cong. (Jul. 27, 2017); see also Kevin Mooney, *Putin Is Funding Green Groups To Discredit Natural Gas Fracking*, NEWSWEEK (Jul. 11, 2017), <http://www.newsweek.com/putin-funding-green-groups-discredit-natural-gas-fracking-635052>; John Sicilliano, *Hacking report: Russia engaged in anti-fracking campaign*, WASH. EXAMINER (Jan. 6, 2017), <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/hacking-report-russia-engaged-in-anti-fracking-campaign/article/2611144>; Higgins, *supra* note 3.

⁶ Senate Comm. on Environment and Public Works, 113th Cong., *Chain of Environmental Command: How a Club of Billionaire and Their Foundation Control the Environmental Movement and Obama’s EPA* (Comm. Print Jul. 30, 2014).

⁷ Megan R. Wilson, *Russian network RT must register as a foreign agent in US*, THE HILL (Sept. 12, 2017), <http://thehill.com/business-a-lobbying/business-a-lobbying/350226-russian-network-rt-must-register-as-foreign-agent-in>.

requires that agents representing the interests of foreign governments in any political or quasi-political capacity disclose public communications aimed at influencing American political debate or public policy.⁸ Through local programs all over the world, RT and other news agencies operate as a government-funded arm of Russia in its attempts to destabilize and disrupt democratic institutions and the free market. The American people have a right to know whether the information they are hearing, seeing, and reading is being presented on behalf of a foreign government.

Social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, have the ability to serve as an effective propaganda arm conveying specific messages to geographically targeted audiences.⁹ The Committee is concerned that divisive social and political messages conveyed through social media have negatively affected certain energy sectors, which can depress research and development in the fossil-fuel sector and the expanding potential for natural gas.¹⁰

To better understand whether Russia is using any Alphabet affiliated entities to influence public opinion on fossil fuels and the U.S. energy market, the Committee requests that Alphabet produce the following documents and information, in electronic format, for the time period January 2010, to the present:

1. All documents and communications referring or relating to any Russian based or funded foreign entity involvement in the U.S. energy market detected on your social media platform.
2. All documents and communications referring or relating to the source of advertisements on any Alphabet affiliated entities related to the energy industry, both renewable and nonrenewable, including but not limited to a list of Russian based or funded companies or other entities purchasing advertising on any Alphabet affiliated entities.
3. All documents and communications referring or relating to the source of advertisements on any Alphabet affiliated entities advocating for so-called green initiatives.

⁸ U.S. DEP'T OF JUSTICE, *Foreign Agent Registration Act* (last visited Sept. 15, 2017), <https://www.fara.gov/>.

⁹ Alex Hern, *Facebook and Twitter are being used to manipulate public opinion – report*, THE GUARDIAN (Jun. 19, 2017), <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/jun/19/social-media-proganda-manipulating-PUBLIC-opinion-bots-accounts-facebook-twitter>.

¹⁰ Elizabeth S. Mitchell, *STUDY: Social Media Is Winning PR War for Anti-Fracking Groups*, ADWEEK (Aug. 12, 2014), <http://www.adweek.com/digital/study-social-media-is-winning-pr-war-for-anti-fracking-groups/>; Christopher Helman, *An Investigation Of The Global-Anti-Fracking Movement*, FORBES (Jan. 2, 2013), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/energysource/2013/01/02/an-investigation-of-the-global-anti-fracking-movement/2/#666a79b64077>.

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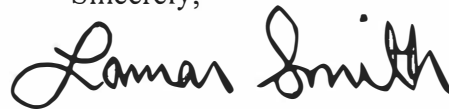
In addition, the Committee requests that appropriate personnel at Alphabet provide a briefing to Committee staff as soon as possible, but no later than October 10, 2017.

The Committee on Science, Space, and Technology has jurisdiction over environmental and scientific research and developmental programs and “shall review and study on a continuing basis laws, programs, and Governmental activities” as set forth in House Rule X. This request and any documents created as a result of this request will be deemed congressional documents and property of the House Science committee. An attachment to this letter provides additional information about responding to the Committee’s request.

We request that you provide the requested documents and information as soon as possible, but no later than 5:00 p.m. on October 10, 2017. When producing documents to the Committee, please deliver production sets to the Majority Staff in Room 2321 of the Rayburn House Office Building and the Minority Staff in Room 394 of the Ford House Office Building. The Committee prefers, if possible, to receive all documents in electronic format.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact Travis Voyles of the Committee staff at 202-225-6371. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lamar Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lamar Smith
Chairman

Encl.

cc: The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Ranking Member, House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology