

1. Mark your confusion.
2. Show evidence of a close reading.
3. Write a 1+ page reflection.

3

FCC chairman lambastes Twitter as net-neutrality debate draws heat

www.chicagotribune.com/bluesky/technology/ct-biz-bsi-fcc-ajit-pai-attacks-twitter-20171129-story.html

Eli Rosenberg

Ajit Pai, the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, blasted Twitter on Tuesday for what he said was a push to "discriminate" against conservatives, during an aggressive defense of his agency's plan to repeal net neutrality rules.

Speaking during an event hosted by the R Street Institute, a conservative think tank, Pai accused Twitter of hypocrisy for its criticism of the FCC's plan to repeal the Obama-era regulation.

"When it comes to a free and open Internet, Twitter is part of the problem," Pai said. "The company has a viewpoint and uses that viewpoint to discriminate."

Twitter, Google and Facebook have been vocal opponents of the FCC's proposal to repeal net neutrality, joining others who say the repeal will harm the flow of information on the Internet. On the other side, Internet service providers such as AT&T, Comcast and Verizon have supported the FCC's push, which it says will allow the Internet to return to the free market environment it was created in.

The FCC is expected to repeal the Obama-era regulations, which are aimed at ensuring all websites are treated equally by Internet providers, at its Dec. 14 meeting.

But Pai, a Republican, said that Twitter's own practices already violate the principles of openness that the company espouses, accusing it of using a "double-standard" to police its own content. He cited the company's recent regulation of "conservative users' accounts," apparently referring to Twitter's recent decision to suspend and de-verify some prominent white nationalists and far-right users on its service. Pai also noted Twitter's decision to prevent Republican Senate hopeful Marsha Blackburn from being able to pay to advertise a campaign video with controversial remarks about abortion, a move which drew a torrent of criticism from conservatives.

"This conduct is many things, but it isn't fighting for an open Internet," he said.

Blackburn was able to post the video to her Twitter account. In the two-and-a-half minute advertisement, the congresswoman said she had fought Planned Parenthood and helped "stop the sale of baby body parts," a reference to controversial 2015 videos that were filmed in secret and heavily edited by an antiabortion activist to purportedly show medical providers discussing the sale of fetal tissue for scientific research. But investigations launched in 13 states and in Congress afterward never unearthed any proof of actual tissue sales.

"Anyone voluntarily following her account could see it, as is their choice as a consumer when they choose to follow her," Twitter said in a statement. "Because advertisements are served to users who do not necessarily follow an account, we therefore have higher standards for their content."

The company eventually allowed the advertisement to be promoted on its service after the uproar.

Pai's comments were yet another reminder of the sensitive place in which Twitter now finds itself in the caustic world of politics. Critics on the left have accused it, as well as other social media companies like

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Facebook, of being a safe haven for extremists, racists, conspiracy theorists and others spreading misinformation. Conservatives have echoed Pai's attacks and increasingly taken aim at the company's moves to suspend prominent far-right accounts.

The deactivation of President Donald Trump's Twitter account for 11 minutes earlier this month, which the company blamed on a rogue employee on their last day of work, raised more questions about the security of political content on the site.

The company's public image has badly suffered after the disclosures that Russian operatives created fake accounts on the service and had some success at gaming its algorithms in order to sow division before the 2016 election.

Pai himself has faced a similar problem: a comment forum set up by the FCC earlier this year for the public to weigh in on its proposal to repeal the net neutrality regulation appears to have been flooded with hundreds of thousands of identical comments supporting the move. Investigators say that many of the comments were submitted by impersonators, and that some of the names and information that were submitted appear to have emerged in a data breach. New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, a Democrat, says the FCC has stymied an investigation into the fraudulent comments, while a journalist's freedom of information requests have been rebuffed.

Pro-net neutrality activists have organized protests in Washington and outside Pai's home in Virginia. Pai, who is an active Twitter user with more than 39,000 followers, posted a video of his remarks Tuesday on his account.

"Now look, I love Twitter," he said. " And anyone who knows me knows that I use it all the time."

Reflection Ideas:

- *Choose a passage from the article and respond to it.
- *Explain your thoughts on Net Neutrality.
- *Find the bias present from the author and explain how it impacts your position.
- *Discuss how the author writes and expresses information in interesting/good ways.