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Conservative Group Warns Republicans About Big Tech's Influence on the Right

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The American Principles Project, a right-wing advocacy group, is warning Republicans in Washington about the influence of Big Tech and its allies on conservatives.

On Tuesday, the group will send a letter calling on Republican lawmakers and staffers to be wary of third-party lobbyists who receive funding from Big Tech in an attempt to "influence public policy on the Right" and to "carefully consider your interactions with Big-Tech funded groups."

"Over the last two years, Big Tech has not only interfered in our elections and increasingly censored conservatives, but also simultaneously plotted to coopt the Republican Party and avoid scrutiny on the Right by pouring millions of dollars into center-right think tanks," wrote Jon Schweppe, director of policy and government affairs at the American Principles Project.

"Each and every year, Big Tech is spending incalculable sums of money to launder its worldview, one that sacrifices American sovereignty and eliminates individual rights, through a network of seemingly disinterested 'conservative' advocacy groups," Schweppe added. "Alas, it is hardly surprising then that as the threats to free speech online have grown, so too have the checks written by Big Tech."

The letter is the latest alarm sent to members of Congress as suspicions in both political parties about Big Tech's financial ties continue to grow.

Although a number of elected officials and conservatives have already announced they will stop accepting donations from companies like Amazon, Facebook and Google, the tech giants continue to support a number of lobbying groups that work in Washington, including right-of-center groups like the R Street Institute, Cato Institute and Americans for Tax Reform.

Now, the American Principles Project wants congressional Republicans to be aware of which groups receive funding from Big Tech, to ensure that lobbyists are acting on their interests independently.

"Meeting with a group that gets Google money is essentially the same as meeting with a Google lobbyist," Schweppe told Axios. "When you get funding from an entity, you have some loyalty

to that entity, especially when they're bankrolling your salary," he said. "Members don't always know how deep this influence is."

But it's not only lobbying groups that receive donations from Big Tech.

According to Federal Election Commission records, Republican Representatives Jim Jordan and Cathy McMorris Rodgers each received \$10,000 from Google NetPAC in the 2019-2020 cycle. Rodgers received an additional \$10,000 from Amazon's PAC and \$6,000 from Facebook's.

In the Senate, GOP Senators Lindsey Graham and Roger Wicker have also been receiving donations from Big Tech, with Graham receiving \$2,500 from Facebook and \$6,000 from Amazon. Wicker received \$3,500 from Facebook, \$2,500 from Amazon and \$5,000 from Google.

Concerns over Big Tech's influence have heightened among both Republicans and Democrats in the wake of the 2020 presidential election.

While conservatives have suggested that Facebook's and Google's algorithms and content moderators are censoring their voices and opinions, Democrats have railed against social media platforms for allowing misinformation to proliferate and for not taking a harder line against users who promote falsehoods or conspiracies.