



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Republicans Love Disinformation “Hearing”

May 11, 2023

I wholeheartedly agree with Ranking Member Ivey about how critical it is that we examine the impact of false information on our Nation. The spread of misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information – including that tied to extremism – has been growing online, particularly on social media, where there are little to no guardrails to stop it. Unfortunately, false information and extremism don’t just stay online. They have real-world, often dangerous, and even violent consequences.

So, let’s discuss how the rampant spread of false information has diminished public confidence in our democratic institutions and why there is an appropriate role for DHS to counter disinformation when carrying out its mission.

Disinformation regarding the 2020 presidential election outcome led to a violent attack against the Capitol aimed at preventing the peaceful, lawful transfer of power.

Disinformation has similarly undermined the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, frustrated disaster relief efforts, and exacerbated political and social divisions.

When discussing disinformation, Republican Members might want to look inward and at their own colleagues. Those on the other side have spread lies about the integrity of our elections, promoted falsehoods surrounding the COVID pandemic, called climate change a hoax, and perpetuated disinformation about the border smugglers to line their pockets, just to name a few.

Now, instead of using this Subcommittee to focus on real challenges facing DHS, they want to discuss the defunct DHS Disinformation Governance Board. Republicans have spent more time discussing the Board than it actually existed.

DHS announced the Disinformation Governance Board in April 2022, paused the Board in May, and dissolved it in August. The idea behind the Board was important – to identify disinformation that threatens the homeland and disseminate accurate information to DHS components and other stakeholders. Indeed, even though the Board was dissolved, the Homeland Security Advisory Council and the Office of Inspector General both underscored the legitimacy and criticality of DHS efforts to address inaccurate information that may undermine its mission of protecting the homeland.

The Department must be able to identify, analyze, and, where necessary, address certain inaccurate information that could undermine public safety and manipulate the American public, while ensuring transparency and protecting civil liberties. It is imperative that the Department continue to exercise its authorities to make timely and accurate information regarding critical homeland security matters available to the public. This responsibility is an outgrowth of DHS’s longstanding efforts at enhancing homeland security information sharing stemming from the breakdowns leading to 9/11.

I hope today's hearing will examine solutions to the challenges DHS is encountering and how Congress can provide the resources and tools needed to protect our homeland.

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