

Billionaire Biden Donor Bankrolled 2020 Election Social Media Censorship Effort

Newly disclosed document confirms billionaire Pierre Omidyar financed the public-private partnership to censor election-related Twitter and Facebook posts.

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The Department of Homeland Security's controversial social media censorship effort during the 2020 election was propped up by a partisan billionaire.

Newly obtained documents, acquired through a public records request, confirm that Pierre Omidyar, the billionaire founder of eBay, financed a specialized portal maintained by the Center for Internet Security (CIS). This portal was used to facilitate the swift removal of predominantly conservative messages on Twitter and Facebook during the previous presidential election.

Omidyar, previously identified as one of the largest donors to campaign groups supporting Joe Biden's presidential bid, donated [\\$45 million](#) to the "Sixteen Thirty Fund" in 2020. This dark money group mobilized Democratic voters and financed pro-Biden Super PACs. However, Omidyar's direct involvement in the DHS partnership, which is now facing [increased scrutiny](#), remained undisclosed until now.

The funding provided by Omidyar to CIS was used to establish a Misinformation Reporting Portal (MiRP). A team from CIS continuously monitored this portal 24/7 from September 28 to November 6, 2020, as revealed in a [post-election report](#), "Election Infrastructure Misinformation Reporting." The Democracy Fund, Omidyar's foundation, supported the creation of the MiRP through a direct grant, according to the report.

The misinformation reporting portal served to rapidly identify and remove instances of alleged misinformation. CIS's report acknowledged that the flagged content ranged from

“intentional misinformation to honest mistakes.” Of the content reported by CIS, 61% “resulted in positive action,” which the group defined as content takedowns or labeling.

This MiRP system was used by a coalition of liberal-leaning research groups and overseen by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (CISA), a sub-agency of the DHS that has led the government’s push to censor social media. Despite government backing for the project, the effort was partisan – the Democratic National Committee was part of the consortium, but not the Republican National Committee, indicating a partisan bias.

“In addition to sharing all reports with CISA, some reports were shared with the Federal Bureau of Investigation,” the CIS report noted. The effort focused on “election narratives” deemed conspiratorial or inaccurate.

Tax records appear to confirm the Omidyar funding. The Democracy Fund’s 990 disclosure shows that it donated [\\$130,000](#) to CIS in 2020. The grant, however, is listed as support for “election security best practices,” a vague description that belied the true function of the MiRP portal.

CIS did not respond to a request for comment. The Omidyar Network discussed this inquiry with me but stopped responding before publication.

Evidence of this MiRP system first emerged [in emails](#) I obtained from a visit to Twitter’s San Francisco headquarters in December. In an email thread dated October 1, 2020, Twitter attorney Stacia Cardille mentioned receiving outreach from DHS, forwarding a censorship demand from CISA, CIS official Aaron Wilson, and a representative from the Election Integrity Partnership, a coalition monitoring misinformation.

The alleged misinformation mentioned in the October 1 thread revolved around conservative warnings regarding potential risks associated with mail-in voting—a concern voiced by partisans from both sides. Twitter, however, took action against conservative accounts but did not similarly act against Democrats who warned against mail-in ballots, as I’ve [previously reported](#). For instance, former D.N.C. chairman Howard Dean [tweeted](#) during the election: “Do not vote by mail. Ok to vote now early and drop your ballot off in person at the proper office. Too late to trust trumps postmaster thug.”

The Dean tweet was noted by Twitter’s content moderation team but no action was taken, while similar messages warning against mail-in voting from conservative accounts were censored.

The CIS report provides a comprehensive explanation of the public-private apparatus employed to influence content on social media. In doing so, the report also debunks recent myths. In April, MSNBC host Mehdi Hasan made a false claim that journalist Matt Taibbi deliberately misrepresented his case under oath during his congressional testimony on CISA’s role in shaping social media decisions. Hasan suggested that Taibbi had willfully conflated CISA with CIS during his testimony. This claim led Representative Stacey Plaskett (D-V.I.) to accuse Taibbi of perjury in a [letter](#).

The CIS report I obtained contradicts Hasan and Plaskett, clarifying that “CIS and CISA worked together to ensure the reports were sent to the social media platform within an hour of their receipt.” CIS also played a pivotal role in triaging the material while maintaining the government partnership with disinformation research think tanks.

In essence, CIS and CISA worked in close collaboration to exert pressure on platforms like Twitter, aiming to remove conservative political expression deemed untrustworthy. The project was a public-private venture, overseen by government agencies, and supported by a system financed entirely by a Democratic donor.

The report makes recommendations for future elections. It notes that misinformation reporting may require dedicated government funding, with a “transition to the operational side of CIS” under the CISA umbrella, as well as better operational support from social media platforms.

The CIS report is part of a batch of documents recently received from Kate Starbird, an advisory board member of CISA at the University of Washington, via a records request. As I [reported](#) on Tuesday, the Justice Department intervened last year to impede the release of records from Starbird’s team. Starbird has also [accused](#) journalists seeking these records of “harassment,” likening it to a cyber attack.

Nevertheless, these inquiries are part of a broader public examination of government-backed censorship. As previously [reported](#), Starbird’s advisory panel advocated for an expanded role for CISA, calling for an extension of its monitoring to include various platforms such as social media, mainstream media, cable news, hyper-partisan media, talk radio, and other online resources.

To support their argument for such a broad mandate, CISA advisors highlighted the detrimental effects of alleged misinformation on key democratic institutions like the courts, as well as other sectors such as the financial system and public health measures, suggesting that virtually any major public interest concern may be used as justification for broad censorship.

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