



April 15, 2021

## Response to Congress Letter re Parler Suspension

Dear Congressman Buck and Senator Lee,

Thank you for your letter dated March 31, 2021. We appreciate the opportunity to share more information about Amazon Web Services (AWS), how our services operate, and how we are different from other technology providers and social media companies you might be familiar with.

AWS provides cloud computing services to millions of customers around the world – from small startups and large enterprises to nonprofits and government organizations. AWS has customers from across the political and business spectrum, and we do not discriminate on the basis of the commercial enterprise or political viewpoints of our customers or their end users.

As an infrastructure services provider, AWS is different from social media networks, digital distribution platforms, and content services providers. Our customers are responsible for the operation and ownership of their applications and the content they host on AWS and make available on the internet. AWS simply provides underlying technology infrastructure (e.g., compute, storage, network) that makes it possible for our customers to build and operate their applications. When customers sign up for AWS, they agree to comply with the law and with AWS's terms of service, including AWS's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) (<https://aws.amazon.com/aup/>). As part of this agreement, our customers are responsible for the content they host and the activities they conduct using our services, including ensuring that the content and activities of their end users comply with AWS's terms.

While customers are responsible for their content, AWS also provides members of the public a process to report any potentially abusive content or activity. When AWS receives an abuse report, the AWS Trust & Safety team reviews the report, notifies the customer of it, and works with them to ensure compliance with AWS's terms. The majority of abuse cases are resolved as a result of our customers removing or disabling the reported content or activity. In the rare case where a customer hosts prohibited content or activity in violation of AWS's terms and is unable or unwilling to prevent, or identify and remove, the prohibited content or activity, the AWS Trust & Safety team may suspend the customer's AWS resource(s). This would be done with notice to the customer in accordance with the customer's agreement with AWS. If suspension is necessary, the AWS Trust & Safety team endeavors to take the least invasive suspension action possible by only disabling access to the specific AWS resource(s) hosting the prohibited content or activity.

With respect to Parler, AWS started receiving a number of abuse reports in November 2020 from members of the public that Parler was hosting content in violation of AWS's terms. In response to those reports, AWS followed the above abuse review process and tried to work with Parler for weeks to ensure compliance with AWS's terms. In the following weeks, despite AWS's good-faith efforts, Parler proved both unable and unwilling to respond effectively to those concerns, and we continued to see an increase in content that encouraged or incited violence. Parler's own statements made clear that, as the then-CEO said at the time, Parler did not "feel responsible for any of this, and neither should the platform." This, in the context of the January 6, 2021 events at the U.S. Capitol and the ongoing threats of violence and calls for murder around the time of the impending presidential inauguration, was another key factor in AWS's decision to suspend Parler's use of specific AWS services that were used to make the site publicly available. We did not suspend Parler's use of other AWS services nor terminate their AWS account or agreement with AWS.

AWS is not the only IT solution available to Parler or any other customer. As you likely know, cloud computing can be both a substitute for, and complement to, other IT solutions. The most common of these are: (1) on premises, where the customer runs its own datacenters; (2) colocation, where a customer pays a third-party datacenter operator to house and operate the customer's dedicated servers; (3) cloud computing; and (4) managed services, where a customer pays a third-party solutions provider to manage the customer's IT needs. Immediately following the suspension of Parler's AWS services, the then-CEO of the company admitted that it had access to numerous potential web-hosting service providers, and at the time of this letter, Parler has been serving its content for months using other infrastructure service solutions.

With the above background, please see below our answers to the specific questions in your letter.

#### **Content Policy:**

- 1. Please provide the specific provisions of your policies resulting, where applicable, in suspension or expulsion from distribution channels (Apple App Store and Google Play Store) or termination of cloud service.**

When customers sign up for AWS, they agree to comply with AWS's terms, including AWS's AUP. Failure to comply with these terms can result in suspension or termination of a customer's use of AWS services.

- 2. Provide a complete history of all changes to policies that govern requirements for content moderation, including changes to definitions of what is acceptable and prohibited speech or conduct.**

Since 2012, the AUP has been updated only once. It was updated in September 2016 to remove "gambling" from the list of prohibited illegal activities. The purpose of this update was to clarify that AWS permits customers to operate legal gambling activities using AWS services.

#### **Review Process:**

- 3. How often are businesses reviewed for compliance with your terms? Is this an ongoing process?**

As an infrastructure services provider, it is our customers who agree to be responsible for the content they host on AWS and to ensure that their use of AWS services complies with the law and AWS's terms. When AWS receives an abuse report about a potential violation of AWS's terms, the AWS Trust & Safety team reviews the report, notifies the customer of the report, and works with the customer to ensure compliance with the law and AWS's terms.

- 4. How many businesses were reviewed in 2020? Of the businesses reviewed in 2020, how many were reviewed because of content moderation practices?**

As stated in Question 3 above, our customers agree to be responsible for the content they host on AWS and to ensure that their use of AWS services complies with the law and AWS's terms. In 2020, the AWS Trust & Safety team followed its abuse review process (outlined in Question 3 above) for thousands of abuse reports.

- 5. How many were suspended?**

If AWS receives an abuse report identifying prohibited content hosted by a customer in violation of AWS's terms, then the matter is resolved by either the customer removing the content or the AWS Trust & Safety team suspending the customer's AWS resource(s) to disable access to the content. Across the millions of AWS customers around the world, in 2020, the AWS Trust & Safety team had to take action against specific content or resources associated with ~75 accounts relating to fraudulent, illegal, and other prohibited content in violation of AWS's terms (excluding SPAM, malware, and phishing). For context, an AWS customer may have multiple accounts with many resources in each account.

**6. How many were terminated?**

AWS did not terminate any customers as a result of content-related violations of AWS's terms in 2020.

**7. What triggers the review process? Are outside inputs such as news reports used in decision making?**

See our response to Question 3 above.

**8. Who is involved during the review process? Is the process independent, or are all individuals participating in the review employees of the company?**

The AWS Trust & Safety team is responsible for handling abuse reports. The members of the AWS Trust & Safety team are AWS employees.

**9. Who makes the final decision to initiate a review process?**

As detailed in Question 3 above, the AWS Trust & Safety team's process is to review abuse reports concerning potential violations of AWS's terms.

**10. Detail the process used during a review to evaluate the target of a review, including any procedures to ensure fair treatment.**

See our response to Question 3 above. As part of the AWS Trust & Safety team's abuse review process, we consider relevant context. This includes the nature of the reported abusive content or activity, the relevant AWS customer's abuse history, and the customer's ability and willingness to identify and remove prohibited content or activity.

**11. Are there different processes for companies that have been accused of violating laws (i.e. money laundering, child trafficking) vs. matters related to content moderation?**

As part of the abuse review process described in Question 3 above, the AWS Trust & Safety team has an expedited process for handling abuse reports regarding certain illegal content (e.g., reports of child sexual abuse material from NCMEC).

**12. Are automated review processes used, and if so, who sets the criteria used by the algorithm to determine whether a business should be reviewed? If automated review processes are used, please describe how the algorithm functions and the data sources used by the algorithm.**

Our abuse review process is not automated or driven by an algorithm. As stated in Question 3, as an infrastructure services provider, it is our customers who agree to be responsible for the content they host on AWS, and it is their responsibility to ensure that their use of AWS services complies with the law and AWS's terms. When AWS receives an abuse report about a potential violation of AWS's terms, the AWS Trust & Safety team reviews the report, notifies the customer of the report, and works with the customer to ensure compliance with the law and AWS's terms.

## Notice, Cure, Termination, and Appeal Process:

### 13. Are businesses notified before a review process is initiated?

When AWS receives an abuse report about a potential violation of AWS's terms, AWS's process is to notify the customer of the report.

### 14. If a review process identifies potential non-compliance, are businesses notified, or is the decision to terminate contracts and/or agreements automatic?

AWS notifies customers of any suspension or termination in accordance with their agreement with AWS.

### 15. Does any notification of non-compliance also include a period of time for remediation to avoid suspension or termination?

When AWS receives an abuse report identifying prohibited content hosted by a customer in violation of AWS's terms, the AWS Trust & Safety team reviews the report, notifies the customer of the report, and works with the customer to ensure compliance with AWS's terms. Customers are typically given an opportunity to consider the abuse report and take appropriate action. For certain illegal content, we may take immediate action, with notice to the customer, in order to mitigate the abuse.

### 16. Is there an appeal process for businesses notified of potential non-compliance? If yes, please describe.

Customers can provide information regarding their resolution of the abuse report and their ability to ensure continued compliance with AWS's terms.

### 17. Is there an appeal process for businesses notified of suspension? If yes, please describe.

See our response to Question 16 above.

### 18. Is there an appeal process for businesses notified of termination? If yes, please describe.

See our response to Question 16 above.

### 19. Who makes the final decision on appeals? Is the appeal review independent? Are outside experts consulted, or are all of the individuals involved employees of the company?

The AWS Trust & Safety team considers relevant information provided by customers and the parties reporting abuse when making determinations. The members of the AWS Trust & Safety team are AWS employees.

### 20. List all businesses terminated/removed since 2017 as a result of content moderation policy violations, the date of their first notice and final termination/removal. How many of these businesses were in social media?

Since 2017, AWS has not terminated or removed a customer as a result of a content-related violation of AWS's terms. Instead, our process is to suspend the customer's ability to make prohibited content publicly available, rather than formal contract termination. As discussed in Question 5 above, if AWS receives an abuse report identifying prohibited content hosted by a customer in violation of AWS's terms, then the matter is resolved by either the customer removing the content or the AWS Trust & Safety team suspending the customer's AWS resource(s) to disable access to the content.

**Parler:**

**21. Was Parler given notice of the potential violation? Was the same amount of time offered to Parler to cure any potential policy violations as is given to other potential violators?**

Yes. The AWS Trust & Safety team followed its abuse review process and tried to work with Parler to ensure compliance with AWS's terms. From November 2020, the AWS Trust & Safety team provided multiple notices to Parler after receiving abuse reports and identified content that encouraged and incited violence in violation of AWS's terms. A representative sample of this content is in [Appendix A](#) for reference.

**22. Who determined the amount of time, if any, provided for Parler to take remediation measures?**

Please see our response to Question 21.

**23. What was the basis for suspension or removal given to Parler in the initial notice?**

Please see our suspension notice to Parler in [Appendix B](#).

**24. Who at your respective companies made the final decision to suspend or terminate Parler's contracts and agreements?**

The decision was made following the AWS Trust & Safety team's abuse review process.

**25. Was the final decision made outside the standard process by company leadership? If so, who made the decision?**

No. The decision was made after going through the AWS Trust & Safety team's abuse review process.

**26. Did the final decision include input from the company's political or media relations advisors, in house or external? If so, who?**

The decision was made after going through the AWS Trust & Safety team's abuse review process, which includes various internal employees.

**27. Was anyone outside the company consulted about the decision before it was made?**

No.

**28. Was anyone outside the company informed of the decision before it was made public?**

No.

**29. Was anyone in the media provided with embargoed notice of the termination?**

No. Media were not provided notice before Parler was informed. And as stated above, AWS did not terminate Parler's AWS account.

**Coordination of Action:**

**30. Apple, Google and Amazon each took actions related to Parler within hours and days of each other. Were these actions taken independent of each other?**

AWS made its decision following the AWS Trust & Safety team's abuse review process and independent of any decision or action by other companies. AWS did not communicate with Apple or Google regarding decisions made about Parler.

**31. Were there any contacts between any of your companies prior to the action against Parler? If so, with whom?**

No.

**32. Was notice of pending action against Parler shared among your companies?**

No.

**33. Was there any effort to sequence public announcements about your action against Parler?**

No.

We are available to answer any additional questions you may have.

Sincerely,

AWS Trust & Safety Team

## Appendix A – Examples of Parler Content

### Example 1

██████████ 23 hours ago · 1.2k

██████████

Shoot the police that protect these shitbag senators right in the head then make the senator grovel a little before capping they ass.

0 1 5

### Example 2

██████████ 1 day ago · 381

██████████

How bout make them hang? #executethemfortreason #treason #deathtotraitors #fuckmikepence



2 1 7

make a comment

██████████ 1 day ago

██████████

Make them better than afraid!

us

0 0 0

██████████ 1 day ago

██████████

"Those who make conversations impossible, make escalation inevitable."  
— Stefan Molyneux

0 0 0

### Example 3

 [redacted] 6 days ago · 393

You liberals and dirty left demonrats and antifa and blm and rhino politicians and Muslims who are against our country our president our constitution and burning down our jobs burning down our businesses burning down our life destroying our children's lives and scaring them destroying our culture our freedoms and our rights our history our lord Jesus ? You cry for free shit ? I'll give you something free a damn bullet to your damn head there's your damn free !!! It's coming we are coming with our list we know where you live we know who you are we are coming for you and it starts on the 6 th civil war 2 is on the arise and it's coming with hell and death ! Lol if you will think it's a joke but when we are in your faces with our guns or fire burning your asses out you won't be Laughing then will you ? Enjoy your last few days you have because it will be your last ! Semper Fi

[read less](#)

6 1 5

### Example 4

 [redacted] 3 days ago · 665 viewed

Aside from ranting and raving, I become more and more radicalized every day. My wishes for a racewar have never been higher. I find myself thinking about killing niggers and jews more and more often. Our people need freedom. Theyve taken everything from us You work 40+ hours a week for what? You work your life way to pay taxes to a group of elites that hate you You watch your women raped and turnt out by niggers You watch as your children are indoctrinated You watch your country fall apart When will enough be enough? We need to act like our forefathers did Kill them all Leave no victims or survivors

[read less](#)

7 3 9

### Example 5

 [redacted] \* 8 hours ago · 517

On January [redacted] we need to start systematicly assassinating **#liberal** leaders, liberal activists, **#blm** leaders and supporters, members of the **#nba** **#nfl** **#mlb** **#nhl** **#mainstreammedia** anchors and correspondents and **#antifa** . I already have a news worthy event planned. **#blmterrorists** **#militia** **#civilwar** **#civilwar2**

[read less](#)

9 0 2

## Example 6

echoed by @ [redacted]

[redacted] [redacted] 7 hours ago · @ 3.0m

↑ America fought a good fight. Our great Country is resilient & we will get thru this difficult time. Acting responsibly at this moment is what all Americans must do. During the past 4 tough years, I found faith, family and true friends were my foundat... [read more](#)

[redacted] [redacted] 7 hours ago · @ 2.0k

↑ I am tired of this ambiguous bullshit. Our feet are in the fire. If there is a plan tell us it, if not get the hell out of our way. The Republic will not survive lukewarm platitudes and half hearted action.

#stopthesteal #millionmilitiamarch

[redacted] [redacted] 6 hours ago · @ 947

@ [redacted]

exactly, enough with the "trust the plan" bullshit. lets go, [redacted] bring your guns  
[#millionmilitiamarch](#)

5 0 1

## Example 7

echoed by @ [redacted]

[redacted] [redacted] 7 days ago · @ 2.3k

↑ All of the Blue states have signed on against the Texas lawsuit. The seeds of our civil war are being sown.

[redacted] [redacted] 7 days ago · @ 72

Yup. It's really happening. I really don't look forward to having to kill someone, but it is necessary for the future of our people. When it comes to how we go about this we should probably avoid mentioning tactics online, I know the left is watching so it's better not to give them ideas.  
[read less](#)

1 0 3

### Example 8

  Nov 16, 2020 · 18 viewed

All this talk is just total bullshit if you people don't get off your ass and start taking these motherfuckers out one of the time fuck blm /antifa put a target on these motherless trash they aren't human taking one out would be like stepping on a roach no different

0 0 0

### Example 9

  23 hours ago · @ 3.6k

**#JackDorsey** , son of Osama Bin Laden, you will die a bloody death alongside Mark Suckerturd. Your final meal will be eating shit from men's assholes with Mark. He will teach you how to do it. Trump did not violate any laws or rules. He did not incite violence. The evidence is clear. You and Mark illegally kicked Trump off after he made a video urging PEACE and telling people to go home. It has been decided and plans are being put in place. Remember the photographs inside your home while you slept? Yes, that close. You will die a sudden death! Lord Trump does not control Antifa/BLM terrorists. Those people are controlled by Clinton Foundation and Democrat Criminal Organization.

**#Trump2020 #Election2020 #ElectionFraud #VoterFraud #NotMyPedophile #StopTheSteal #HoldTheLine #CorruptMedia #AmericaFIRST #FightBack #MAGA #Patriots #SCOTUS #Kraken #KrakenOnSteroids #America #USA #InsurrectionAct #WWG1WGA #Q #Qanon #ProudBoys #TrumpWon #FightBack**

read less

7 2 8

**Example 10**

██████████ ██████████ 3 hours ago · 👁 230  
@██████████

#EnemiesofthePeople #senators #Election2020 <https://2.56.242.22>



**Name**  
Douglas (Doug) La Follette

**Email**  
██████████



██████████

Wisconsin Secretary of State: He assisted the governor in certifying a fraudulent election.

enemiesofthenation.com

0 1 1 1/2

██████████ ██████████ 4 hours ago · 👁 115  
@██████████

#EnemiesofthePeople #trump



**Name**  
Bradford (Brad) Jay Raffensperger

**Email**  
██████████



██████████

Georgia Secretary of State: Donald Trump called him the enemy of the people. Massive voter fraud took place in Georgia. According to Trump, he took some deal that allowed ballot harvesting to occur. He worked with Democrat Stacey Abrams to do this.

enemiesofthenation.com

0 1 0 1/2

██████████ ██████████ 5 hours ago · 👁 276  
@██████████

#EnemiesofthePeople #trump enemiesofthenation.com



**Name**  
Gretchen Esther Whitmer

**Email**  
██████████



██████████

Governor of Michigan: She has always been against Trump and the election in her state was completely rigged. She is one of the top traitors on this list.

0 3 3

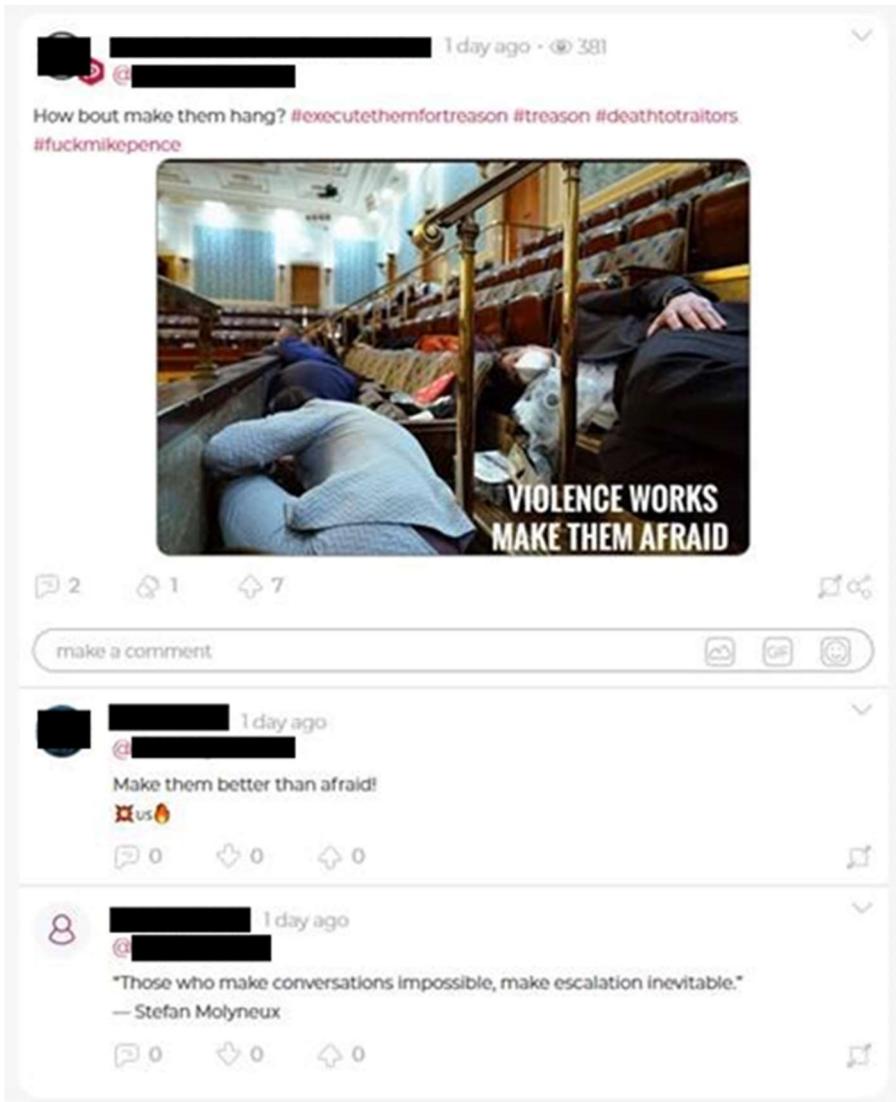
## Appendix B – Suspension Notice

Dear Amy,

Thank you for speaking with us earlier today.

As we discussed on the phone yesterday and this morning, we remain troubled by the repeated violations of our terms of service. Over the past several weeks, we've reported 98 examples to Parler of posts that clearly encourage and incite violence. Here are a few examples below from the ones we've sent previously:





Recently, we've seen a steady increase in this violent content on your website, all of which violates our terms. It's clear that Parler does not have an effective process to comply with the AWS terms of service. It also seems that Parler is still trying to determine its position on content moderation. You remove some violent content when contacted by us or others, but not always with urgency. Your CEO recently stated publicly that he doesn't "feel responsible for any of this, and neither should the platform." This morning, you shared that you have a plan to more proactively moderate violent content, but plan to do so manually with volunteers. It's our view that this nascent plan to use volunteers to promptly identify and remove dangerous content will not work in light of the rapidly growing number of violent posts. This is further demonstrated by the fact that you still have not taken down much of the content that we've sent you. Given the unfortunate events that transpired this past week in Washington, D.C., there is serious risk that this type of content will further incite violence.

AWS provides technology and services to customers across the political spectrum, and we continue to respect Parler's right to determine for itself what content it will allow on its site. However, we cannot provide services to a customer that is unable to effectively identify and remove content that encourages or incites violence against others. Because Parler cannot comply with our terms of service and poses a very real risk to public safety, we plan to suspend Parler's account effective Sunday, January 10th, at 11:59PM PST. We will ensure that all of your data is preserved for you to migrate to your own servers, and will work with you as best as we can to help your migration.

- AWS Trust & Safety Team