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TECH

Ted Cruz confronts Google with an internal presentation showing how tech companies are leaning toward censorship

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KEY POINTS

Google vice president for government affairs & public policy Karan Bhatia made his first public testimony Tuesday.

Senator Ted Cruz opened his questioning with an acquired 2018 presentation that showed tech firms including Google, are unbalanced when it comes to free speech.

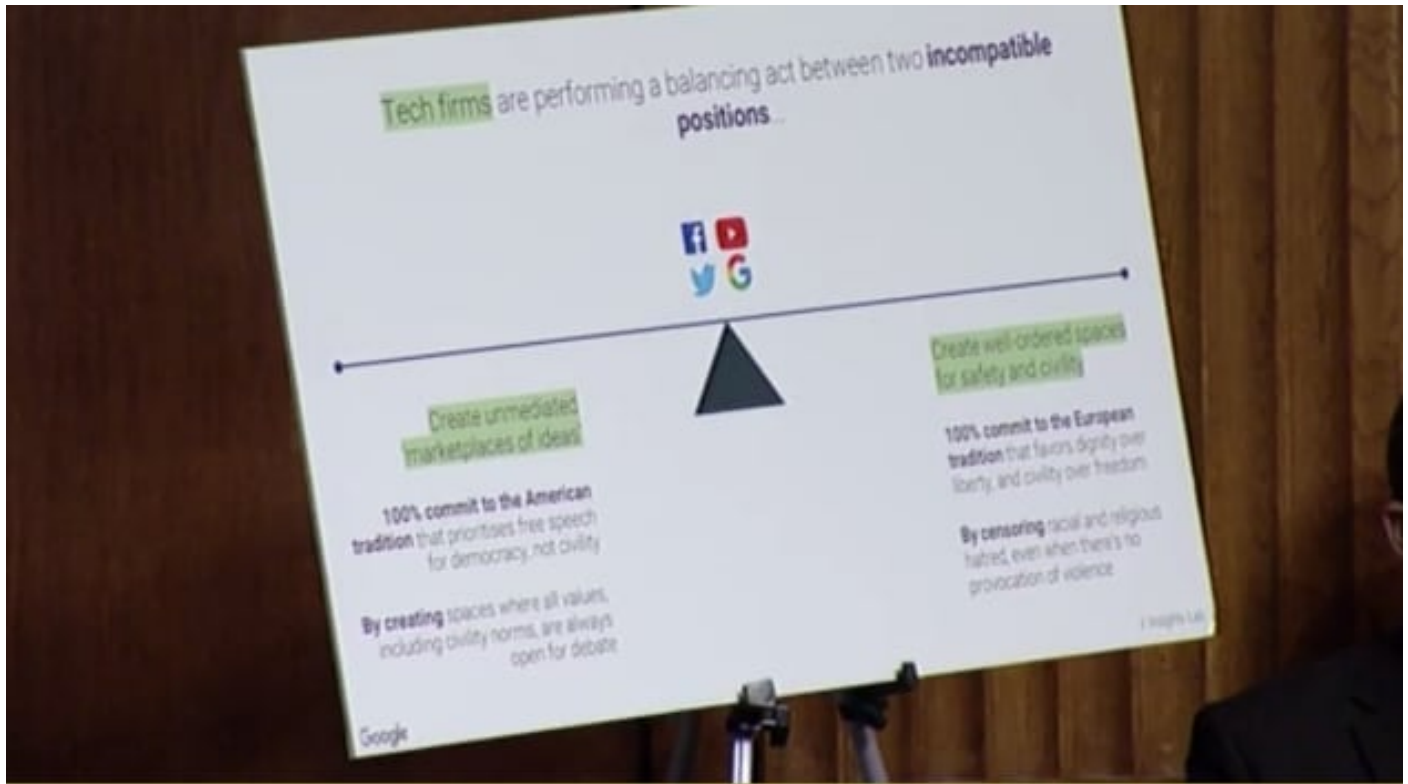
Bhatia said he thought it was a presentation used by a marketing team for brainstorming.

In his first line of questioning for [Google](#) during a Senate hearing on Tuesday, Senator Ted Cruz, R-Tx., displayed a Google presentation dated 2018 suggesting that tech firms, including Google, were moving away from unmediated free speech and toward censorship.

Google Vice President for Government Affairs & Public Policy, Karan Bhatia appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee to discuss censorship through search engines on Tuesday. Google has faced concern from Republican politicians including Senator

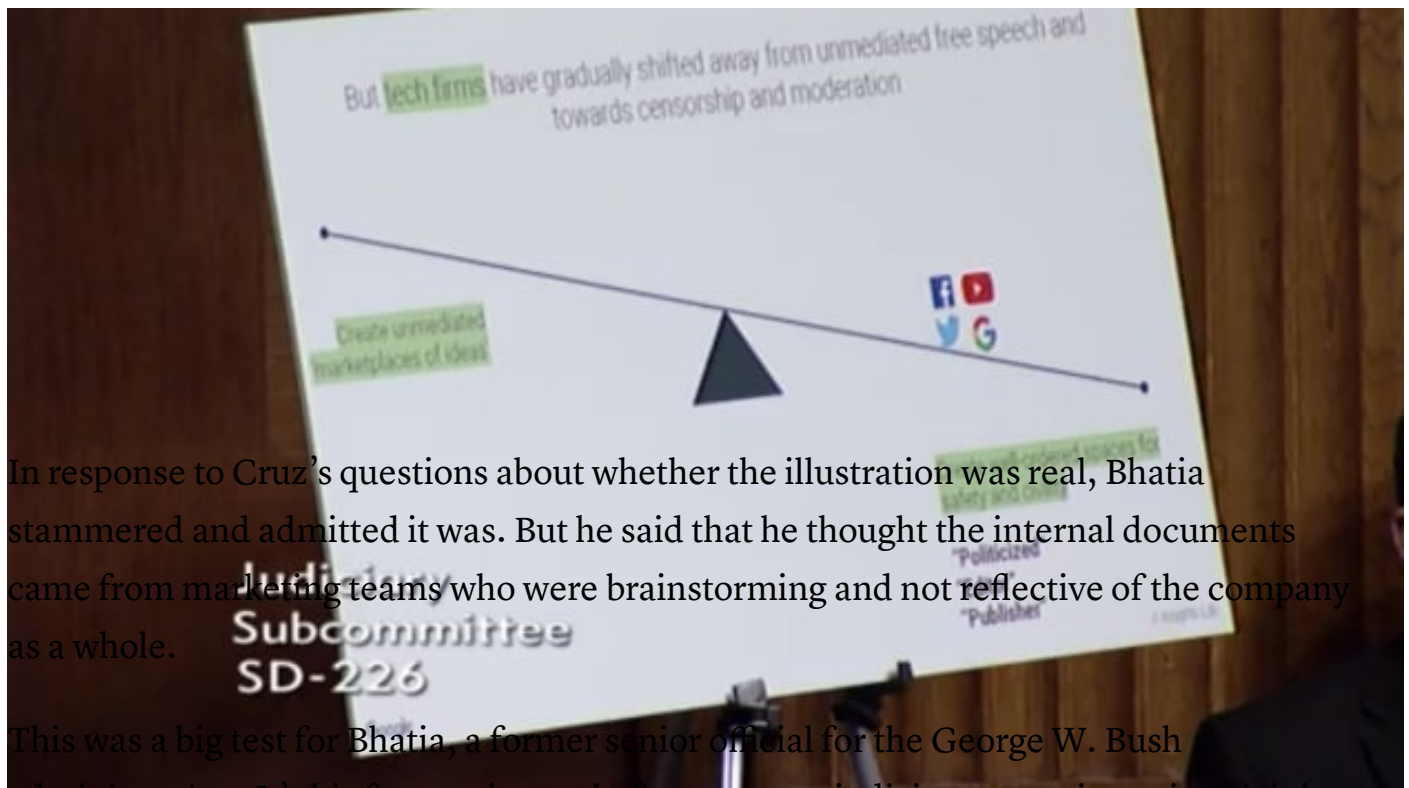


Cruz showed a presentation slide that read “Tech firms are performing a balancing act between two incompatible positions.” The slide included logos from [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), Google YouTube (which is also owned by Google). The balance illustration described an ideal balance of “unmediated marketplaces of ideas” and “well-ordered spaces for safety and civility.”



Google 2018 internal document that shows tech firms' balancing act.

The following slide showed a tilt toward censorship:



In response to Cruz's questions about whether the illustration was real, Bhatia stammered and admitted it was. But he said that he thought the internal documents came from marketing teams who were brainstorming and not reflective of the company as a whole.

This was a big test for Bhatia, a former senior official for the George W. Bush administration. It's his first testimony before a senate judiciary committee since joining Google about a year ago. Bhatia already hinted at his arguments in preemptive [opinion article](#) he wrote Monday for [FoxNews.com](#). He was visibly nervous early on in the hearing and that didn't change much as the questioning continued.

Members asked Bhatia whether Google is working with China on a censored search engine, to which Bhatia said the company has a "small" amount of work it's doing with China but that it had abandoned plans for a search engine in the country. He also continued to say the company does not intentionally censor speech in the U.S. The members' responses suggested they distrusted Bhatia's answers.

Committee members continued to grill Bhatia on a number of issues — some of which weren't entirely related to censorship — often cutting him off if he didn't answer with a concise "yes" or "no."

"You're doing something remarkable and that is you are speaking less candidly than Mark Zuckerberg," Cruz said at one point.

Cruz ended the hearing advising Google to follow up with more detailed answers and to take an independent, third-party audit to see if its search tools yielded biased results.

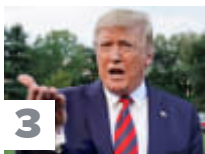
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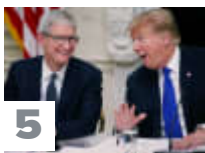
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