

Mr. Larry Page, CEO  
Alphabet Inc.  
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway  
Mountain View, CA 94043

Mr. Eric Schmidt, Executive Chairman  
Alphabet Inc.  
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway  
Mountain View, CA 94043

October 20, 2017

Dear Mr. Page and Mr. Schmidt:

NorthStar Asset Management, Inc. is a socially responsible investment firm based in Boston and a long-time holder of Alphabet, Inc. stock. Our clients currently own over 6,100 shares of class A common stock and over 1,000 shares of Alphabet class C common stock.

We are aware that in June 2017, Google made major changes in its algorithm designed to combat fake news. While we support that endeavor, it has come to our attention that **those algorithmic changes have also steeply limited the Google-referred viewership of progressive, anti-racist, democratic, left-leaning websites** which provide *accurate* news and information regarding issues such as the reality of climate change, anti-war, and anti-propaganda efforts.

A variety of progressive news sites such as Democracy Now, TruthOut, AlterNet, and Common Dreams have suffered a steep drop off of Google-referred viewership. **Traffic has declined by 20-67% for these sites**, with a clear connection to Google's June 25, 2017 algorithmic changes aimed at fact-checking fake news. These progressive websites provide legitimate reposts of news and information that serve a critical purpose in our current era – amplifying the counterpoints to fake news, and pro-racist, anti-environment, anti-peace propaganda.

We also note that Google's algorithmic changes have not succeeded at the intended goal of reducing fake news. **Reports indicate that immediately after the October 1, 2017 mass shooting in Las Vegas, one of the "Top Stories" on Google was a fake news accusation by 4Chan and other propaganda sites.** As reported by Vox<sup>1</sup>:

Following this weekend's deadly mass shooting in Las Vegas, numerous rumors centered on fake victims and misinformation about the tragedy have circulated across social media.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.vox.com/culture/2017/10/5/16400394/las-vegas-shooting-fake-news-propaganda>

Amid those rumors was a series of deliberate hoaxes that originated from a variety of sources — including 4chan’s alt-right stronghold /pol/; a fake Facebook page claiming that the shooter, Stephen Paddock, was a member of antifa; and several troll accounts on Facebook and Twitter.

Vox goes on to illustrate the consequences of Alphabet’s inability to contain damaging fake news: “The Las Vegas shooter hoaxes seem to align with something larger — an ongoing war, waged online, against mainstream media and democratic society.” Considering that Google’s search algorithm allowed for the proliferation of these fake news sites after the national tragedy, **we hope that Alphabet will be seriously concerned with the fact that there is current ongoing damage to the spread of progressive news sites that seek to promote peace, fight propaganda, and spread truth.**

We urge Alphabet to immediately review and revise the algorithms in place to ensure that legitimate websites are no longer caught in the snare intended to limit searches referring to fake news websites. We look forward to your response and an explanation of how Alphabet will immediately solve this matter. Please contact me through my Assistant Director of Shareholder Activism, Engagement, and Social Research, Mari Schwartzer: mschwartz@northstarasset.com.

Sincerely,



Julie N.W. Goodridge  
CEO