United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510–6125

WEBSITE: https://commerce.senate.gov

October 3, 2025

Ms. Maryana Iskander
Chief Executive Officer
Wikimedia Foundation
1 Sansome Street, Suite 1895
San Francisco, CA 94104

Dear Ms. Iskander:

I write to request information about ideological bias on the Wikipedia platform and at the Wikimedia Foundation.

Wikipedia began with a noble concept: crowdsource human knowledge using verifiable sources and make it free to the public. That's what makes reports of Wikipedia's systemic bias especially troubling. Wikipedia is one of the most visited websites in the world,[1] and its articles appear in more than 80 percent of desktop search results for common queries, according to Northwestern University researchers.[2] Its influence extends even further in the age of artificial intelligence, as every major large language model has been trained on the platform.[3] Wikipedia shapes what Americans read today and what technology will produce tomorrow.

Wikipedia says that its articles must be written from a neutral point of view (NPOV). But as Wikipedia's co-founder Larry Sanger argues, "Wikipedia's 'NPOV' is dead."[4] As Sanger tells it, most Wikipedia editors' "notion of what is credible" biases them against "conservatism, traditional religiosity, and minority perspectives on science and medicine."[5] And indeed,

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[1] *Most Visited Websites in the United States, Updated July 2025*, SEMRUSH, https://perma.cc/3LZR-FFNQ (last visited Oct. 1, 2025).

[2] Nicholas Vincen & Brent Hecht, *A Deeper Investigation of the Importance of Wikipedia Links to Search Engine Results,* 5 PACM ON HUMAN-COMPUTER INTERACTION 2 (2021), https://dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.1145/3449078; *cf.* Kent Campbell, *2025 Online Reputation Management Statistics*, REPUTATION X (July 3, 2025), https://blog.reputationx.com/online-reputation-management-statistics ('Wikipedia ranks for as many as 99% of all search queries.").

[3] Selena Deckelmann, *Wikipedia's Value in the Age of Generative AI,* WIKIMEDIA FOUNDATION (July 12, 2023), https://wikimediafoundation.org/news/2023/07/12/wikipedias-value-in-the-age-of-generative-ai/.

[4] Larry Sanger, *Wikipedia Is Badly Biased,* LARRYSANGER.ORG (May 14, 2020), https://larrysanger.org/2020/05/wikipedia-is-badly-biased/.

[5] *Id.*

researchers have found that articles on the site often reflect a left-wing bias. According to the Manhattan Institute:

- "Wikipedia entries are more likely to attach negative sentiment to terms associated with a right-leaning political orientation than to left-leaning terms,"
- "[T]erms that suggest a right-wing political stance are more frequently connected with emotions of anger and disgust than those that suggest a left-wing stance," and
- "[T]erms associated with left-leaning ideology are more frequently linked with the emotion of joy than are right-leaning terms."[6]

Bias is particularly evident in Wikipedia's reliable sources/perennial sources list, which aggregates the editing community's "consensus" about the reliability of information sources like news organizations, nonprofits, and other websites. Wikipedia lists both MSNBC and CNN as "generally reliable" sources, while listing Fox News as a "generally unreliable" source for politics and science.[7] The left-wing Southern Poverty Law Center gets a top rating, but the Heritage Foundation, a prominent conservative think tank, is a "blacklisted" and "deprecated" source that Wikipedia's editors have determined "promotes disinformation."[8]

Another stark example of bias emerged last month after the horrific murder of Iryna Zarutska on a train in Charlotte, North Carolina, which became a cause célèbre. Police arrested a 34-year-old man, Decarlos Brown, Jr., who was seen on video footage sitting behind Zarutska before suddenly stabbing her.[9] Yet when a Wikipedia article about the incident was created, editors tried to take down the page, claiming the incident was not notable.[10] Others attempted to scrub details about Brown, such as his name and criminal record.[11]

Compounding the concern, the Wikimedia Foundation financially supports left-wing organizations that contribute to Wikipedia content. A review of the Wikimedia Foundation's grantmaking by the Daily Caller News Foundation found that the Wikimedia Foundation "donated hundreds of thousands of dollars during the 2022–2023 fiscal year to activist groups seeking to bring the online encyclopedia more in line with traditionally left-of-center points of view."[12] One Wikimedia Foundation grant recipient, Art+Feminism, "envision[s] dismantling

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[6] David Rozado, *Is Wikipedia Politically Biased?*, MANHATTAN INST. (June 20, 2024), https://manhattan.institute/article/is-wikipedia-politically-biased.

[7] *Reliable sources/Perennial sources*, WIKIPEDIA, https://perma.cc/JE74-4UH4 (last visited Oct. 1, 2025).

[8] *Id.*

[9] Holly Yan et al., *Video Shows Fatal Stabbing of Ukrainian Refugee on Charlotte Light Rail – Stirring Debate on Crime in Major US Cities*, CNN (Sept. 8, 2025), https://www.cnn.com/2025/09/08/us/iryna-zarutska-murder-ukraine-refugee.

[10] Ashley Rindsberg, *A Woman Was Stabbed to Death on a Train. Wikipedia Wants to Erase Her Story*, THE FREE PRESS (Sept. 8, 2025), https://www.thefp.com/p/woman-stabbed-to-death-on-train-by-serial-criminal.

[11] *Id.*

[12] Robert Schmad, *Wikipedia Donations Go Toward Embedding Feminism and Racial Justice in World's Largest Encyclopedia,* DAILY CALLER (Sept. 23, 2024), https://dailycallernewsfoundation.org/2024/09/23/wikipedia-

supremacist systems and creating pathways for everyone to participate in writing (and righting) history."[13] Another grant recipient, Whose Knowledge, aims to "decolonize the internet" and cover "queer feminist knowledge from Bosnia and Herzegovina."[14]

The Wikimedia Foundation's "Movement Strategy," which outlines goals for Wikipedia leading up to 2030, further reflects a left-wing bent. The Movement Strategy has two main goals: "Knowledge as a Service"—which "builds tools for allies"—and "Knowledge Equity"—an attempt to "focus on the knowledge and communities that structures of power and privilege have left out."[15] These goals are exemplified by the attitude of the Foundation's former CEO, Katherine Maher, who found Wikipedia's original "free and open" ethos to be "recapitulating many of the same power structures and dynamics that exist offline," such as a "white, male, Westernized construct around who matters in societies."[16] Put plainly, the Wikimedia Foundation has actively sought to prop up a Wikipedia editor driven by ideology over neutrality.

Meanwhile, there is detailed evidence of a coordinated editing campaign to push antisemitic content on the platform.[17] Through more than 1.5 million edits over the past decade, a coordinated group of editors pushed antisemitic narratives on Wikipedia while whitewashing the activities of groups like Hamas.[18] These were not "organic changes that occur on Wikipedia as editors update pages to reflect evolving understandings of complex issues," but rather a "long-running, coordinated scheme that involved serious infractions to Wikipedia's anti-bias policies."[19] The Wikimedia Foundation has said it is taking steps to combat this editing campaign,[20] raising further questions about the extent to which it is intervening in editorial decisions and to what end.

The Standing Rules of the Senate grant the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation jurisdiction over communications, including online information platforms.[21] As the Chairman of the Committee, I request that you provide written responses to the questions below, as well as requested documents, no later than October 17, 2025, and in accordance with

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donations-go-toward-embedding-feminism-and-racial-justice-in-worlds-largest-encyclopedia/; Wikimedia Foundation Inc., Form 990 at 39 (2022), https://cdn01.dailycaller.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Wikimedia-Foundation-Org-Full-Filing-Nonprofit-Explorer-ProPublica.pdf.

[13] *Id.*

[14] *Id.*

[15] *Movement Strategy,* WIKIMEDIA, https://perma.cc/T54C-PWVM (last visited Oct. 1, 2025).

[16] Mairead Elordi, *'White, Male, Westernized': NPR President Said She Opposed Wikipedia's 'Free and Open' Mission,* DAILY WIRE (Apr. 18, 2024), https://www.dailywire.com/news/white-male-westernized-npr-president-said-she-opposed-wikipedias-free-and-open-mission.

[17] Letter from Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, et al., to Maryana Iskander, CEO, Wikimedia Foundation (Apr. 30, 2025), https://wassermanschultz.house.gov/uploadedfiles/final_letter_to_wikimedia_foundation_may.pdf.

[18] *Id.*

[19] *Id.*

[20] *Id.*

[21] S. Rules XXV(1)(f); XXVI(8)(a)(2).

the attached instructions. All document requests refer to documents created between January 1, 2020, and the present.

1. Describe how content is created and edited on Wikipedia, including the role of the English Wikipedia Arbitration Committee (ArbCom), the Wikimedia Endowment, and the Wikimedia Foundation. Include documents sufficient to show what supervision, oversight, or influence, if any, the Wikimedia Foundation has over the editing community.

2. Provide documents sufficient to show how the Wikimedia Foundation addresses political or ideological bias in (a) Wikipedia content, (b) editorial practices, or (c) Wikipedia governance, including any reports, analyses, or summaries regarding political or ideological bias on Wikipedia and what corrective actions should be or have been taken. Include discussions by the Wikimedia Foundation board related to these topics, the ideological balance of the board itself, or public criticisms of Wikipedia for ideological bias.

3. Provide a list with descriptions of all ArbCom cases involving political or ideological bias in Wikipedia content or editing practices since January 1, 2020.

4. Provide documents sufficient to show any revisions, clarifications, reviews, studies, or analyses of Wikipedia's NPOV policy, including any Wikimedia Foundation board meeting minutes, presentations, or staff discussions evaluating the NPOV policy.

5. Provide documents sufficient to show how the Wikimedia Foundation or the Wikipedia Community determines the categorization of sources on the reliable sources/perennial sources list.

6. Provide documents sufficient to show Wikimedia Foundation's policies on removing or banning members of the editing community, including what circumstances and what procedures are required to remove an editor or administrator.

7. Provide documents sufficient to show the Wikimedia Foundation and the Wikimedia Endowment's policies regarding real or perceived conflicts of interest, including those relating to the influence of large donors on Wikipedia's content creation or editing practices. Include documents related to donor transparency reports, board discussions, or reviews of potential conflicts of interest at Wikipedia.

8. In a response the Wikimedia Foundation previously provided to me on May 9, 2023, the Foundation claimed "[n]one of [the] engagements between the Foundation's employees and the government agencies and/or departments resulted in the alteration of content on

Wikimedia Projects."[22] Yet, former Wikimedia CEO Katherine Maher has said that the Foundation "took a very active approach to disinformation" including through "conversations with government," especially for content relating to elections and the COVID-19 pandemic.[23] Please reconcile these two, seemingly contradictory statements.

9. Provide any and all documents and communications—including emails, texts, or other digital messages—between any officer, employee, or agent of the Wikimedia Foundation and any officer, employee, or agent of the federal government since January 1, 2020.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Ted Cruz
Chairman

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[22] Letter from Stephen LaPorte, General Counsel, Wikimedia Foundation to then-Ranking Member Cruz (May 9, 2023) (on file with the Comm.).

[23] Atlantic Council, *A Conversation with Former Wikimedia CEO, Katherine Maher*, YOUTUBE (June 22, 2021, 26:47), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-JRPJnVvOU&t=1600s.