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TECHNOLOGY

Zuckerberg: Facebook to stop recommending political groups in bid to 'turn down the temperature'

The move is the latest effort by the world's largest social network to lessen its role as a vector for political acrimony.



Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said the platform would no longer recommend political groups to its users. | Andrew Harnik, File/ AP Photo

By **CRISTIANO LIMA**

01/27/2021 06:48 PM EST



Facebook will no longer recommend political and civic groups to its users, CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced Wednesday — shuttering a practice that many

lawmakers and critics said contributed to polarization online.

The impact: The move is the latest effort by the world's largest social network to lessen its role as a vector for political acrimony, less than a year and a half after [Zuckerberg championed Facebook's role as a platform for "free expression"](#) on even divisive issues.

Key context: The tech giant temporarily paused those recommendations in October for U.S. users in the run-up to the 2020 elections. But it has [faced scrutiny from liberal lawmakers](#) for resuming the practice, [according to a Markup report](#), particularly in the aftermath of the Jan. 6 Capitol riot.

A clampdown on political amplification: During the company's fourth-quarter earnings call on Wednesday, Zuckerberg called the decision "a continuation of work we've been doing for a while to turn down the temperature and discourage divisive conversations."

The Facebook chief also said the company is considering taking new steps to limit the amount of political content users see in its News Feed.

"Politics has kind of had a way of creeping into everything, and I think lot of ... the feedback that we see from our community is that people don't want that in their experience," Zuckerberg said on the call with investors.

Under pressure: Tech companies are facing immense political scrutiny for the role social media platforms played in the insurrection at the Capitol.

Dozens of Democrats last week called on Facebook and other social media companies to overhaul their recommendations and algorithms to reduce the spread of incendiary, divisive and violent content on their platforms. The lawmakers railed against the companies, saying that by creating a "digital echo chamber," they had contributed to the radicalization of those who stormed the Capitol.

"Perhaps no single entity is more responsible for the spread of dangerous conspiracy theories at scale or for inflaming anti-government grievance than the one that you started and that you oversee today as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer," they wrote in a letter to Zuckerberg.

The issue has also drawn bipartisan concern. A group of Senate Republicans and Democrats in 2019 [teamed up on legislation](#) to require platforms to give users the option of experiencing sites without algorithmic recommendations.

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