

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 17, 2021

Jeffrey Bezos  
Founder and CEO  
Amazon.com, Inc.  
410 Terry Ave. North  
Seattle, WA 98109

Dear Mr. Bezos,

We are writing to inquire about the standards and policies that Amazon.com uses for removing books and the extent to which it seeks to apply them in a consistent manner without political bias.

We respect the right of Amazon.com, Inc., like any other private company, to do business with whomever and however you see fit within the limits of the law. We do not seek to force you to bake a cake, or sell a book, reflecting causes in which you do not believe. However, we recognize that the federal government, by creating Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act (CDA), has largely insulated online platforms—like Amazon.com—from liability based on decisions made *in good faith* to remove content it considers objectionable.<sup>1</sup> Last, we believe this good faith standard carries an inherent responsibility that online platforms undertake decisions to censor content in a consistent and unbiased manner.

It is with these considerations in mind that we seek more information why Amazon.com makes available for sale on its website copies of such books as Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Mao's *Little Red Book*, the *Anarchists Cook Book*, or Ted Kaczynski's *Technological Slavery*, but Ryan Anderson's *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Movement* was recently removed from sale after having been sold for three years on Amazon.com—including a stint on the best seller list.<sup>2</sup> We wonder what principles, protocols, or rules are being violated by Mr. Anderson's work that were not also violated by Hitler, Mao, or others.

Again, we would like to emphasize that we are not asking you to make value judgements on the books you sell on your website, just as we are not making value judgements about your website based on the books you do or do not sell. We simply ask that you delineate for us what disqualifies a book discussing growing cultural phenomena, like transgenderism, from sale while a book with detailed descriptions of bomb making or calls to genocide are allowed to be sold openly in your marketplace.

Amazon.com currently controls a majority of the print book market in the United States, and a supermajority of e-book sales. In other words, your censorship decisions affect the dissemination of facts, opinion, and culture on an incalculable scale. As such, we believe that Congressional interest in promoting open and fair market practices is justified.

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<sup>1</sup> See, 47 U.S.C. 230 (c)(2)(A)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.newsweek.com/best-selling-controversial-book-transgender-people-removed-amazon-3-years-after-publication-1571087>

For these reasons, we would request that you reply with the following:

1. A comprehensive set of Amazon.com's guidelines and policies for deciding which books do and do not meet the criteria for acceptable sales at Amazon.com;
2. A comprehensive terms of service document for all book sellers and authors wishing to engage with the Amazon.com platform;
3. An explanation of whether or not you believe that Section 230 of the CDA's good faith requirement would require you to apply censorship decisions in a consistent and unbiased manner;
4. A description of the process you followed to "carefully consider" Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Mao's *Little Red Book*, the *Anarchists Cook Book*, and Ted Kaczynski's *Technological Slavery* for inclusion in your stores;<sup>3</sup>
5. Given that Amazon.com, Inc. does not sell content it "determine[s] is hate speech... advocates terrorism, or other material we deem inappropriate or offensive"<sup>4</sup> and "carefully consider[s] the content we make available in our stores,"<sup>5</sup> can you provide your reasoning for determining that Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Mao's *Little Red Book*, the *Anarchists Cook Book*, and Ted Kaczynski's *Technological Slavery* do not constitute hate speech, advocate terrorism, or convey inappropriate or offensive material?
6. A list of books that have been removed from Amazon.com in the past five years and the justifications for the removal of each book;
7. Any procedure or protocol Amazon.com has for notifying authors or vendors of the fact that their book will not be accepted or sold, and the adjudication process for them to appeal the decision, if such an appeal protocol exists;
8. Any internal correspondence related to Amazon.com's decision to remove Ryan Anderson's *When Harry Became Sally* from sale on your website;
9. A commitment to answer further questions from Members of Congress and their Staff in the future, both during informal information requests and formal Congressional inquiries;

To us, and to many Americans, the ability to conduct one's business freely, and in compliance with our own moral code is of paramount importance. Also of paramount importance is the desire to promote a free market governed by transparent rules, that all Americans can access. We believe that our inquiries and your answers will help us in pursuit of these lofty goals.

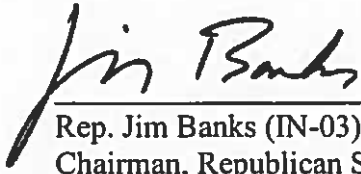
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<sup>3</sup> In a letter from Brian Huseman, Vice President of Public Policy for Amazon.com, Inc., responding to a Letter from U.S. Senators Hawley, Rubio, Braun, and Lee, Huseman stated, "We carefully consider the content we make available in our stores..."

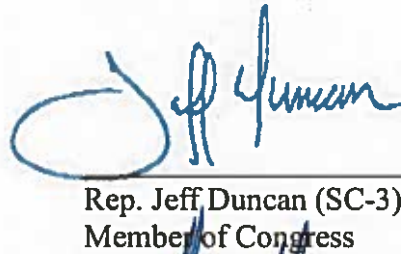
<sup>4</sup> Content Guidelines for Books, Amazon.com.  
<https://www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html?nodeId=201995150>

<sup>5</sup> In a letter from Brian Huseman, Vice President of Public Policy for Amazon.com, Inc., responding to a Letter from U.S. Senators Hawley, Rubio, Braun, and Lee, Huseman stated, "We carefully consider the content we make available in our stores..."

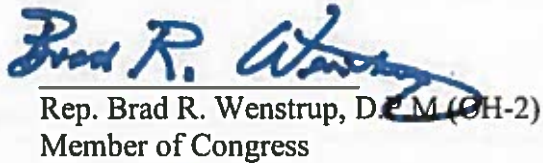
Sincerely,




Rep. Jim Banks (IN-03)  
Chairman, Republican Study Committee



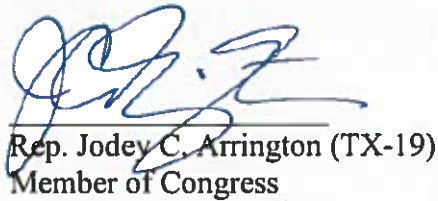
Rep. Jeff Duncan (SC-3)  
Member of Congress



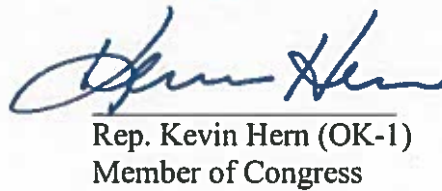
Rep. Brad R. Wenstrup, D. M. (OH-2)  
Member of Congress



Rep. Kelly Armstrong (ND-AL)  
Member of Congress



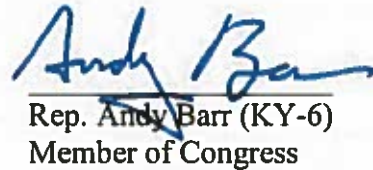
Rep. Jodey C. Arrington (TX-19)  
Member of Congress



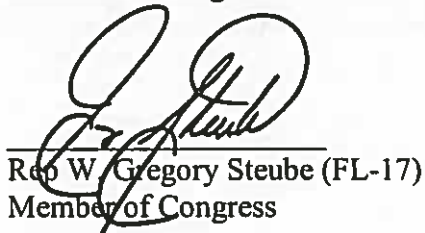
Rep. Kevin Hern (OK-1)  
Member of Congress



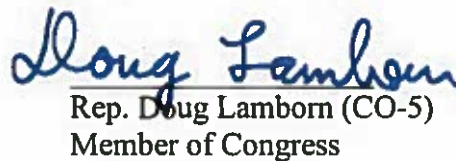
Rep. Guy Reschenthaler (PA-14)  
Member of Congress



Rep. Andy Barr (KY-6)  
Member of Congress



Rep. W. Gregory Steube (FL-17)  
Member of Congress



Rep. Doug Lamborn (CO-5)  
Member of Congress