

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 1, 2022

Steven Brill
CEO, NewsGuard Technologies, Inc.
25 W. 52nd Street, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10019

Dear Mr. Brill,

We write to you today to express concern about the “anti-misinformation” partnership announced on January 25, 2022, between the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and NewsGuard. This attempt to introduce a tool which purportedly will act as a “beacon of clarity” to millions of American students and their families is worthy of intense examination. This is particularly true considering AFT and NewsGuard have a history of demonstrating left-wing bias.

According to reports, NewsGuard claims its “apolitical journalistic criteria... are applied fairly and accurately to all sites, regardless of the site’s topic, tone, or political leaning.”¹ However, an analysis of NewsGuard’s rating system by MRC Free Speech America found clear liberal bias in NewsGuard’s misinformation scoring system – in other words, *NewsGuard’s misinformation grades are themselves misinformation*. MRC Free Speech America’s analysis determined NewsGuard has scored left and left-leaning outlets an average of 27 points higher than right and right leaning outlets.² The organization regularly gave high marks to obviously progressive and left leaning outlets such as *Occupy Democrats*, *The Nation*, and *Jacobin*, which have published articles promoting progressive views on matters such as riots and property destruction and socialism. These are hardly unbiased entities, and any rating system that ranks them as such deserves our scrutiny.

To make matters worse, NewsGuard has even ranked several Chinese state-run media outlets higher – that is, more trustworthy/truthful– than popular conservative U.S. news sources.³ In other words, according to this ranking, communist propaganda from China is more unbiased than conservative-leaning American news sources. It seems the AFT would prefer that American schoolchildren read this Chinese propaganda than read content from a right-leaning American media outlets, which is both absurd and unjust. These factors taken together demonstrate that

¹ [Education, Tech Policy Leaders Ask Congress to Investigate Partnership Between NewsGuard, Teachers’ Union](#), April 2022

² [Study: NewsGuard Ratings System Heavily Skews in Favor of Left-Wing Outlets](#), December 2021

³ [NewsGuard Rates OANN, Newsmax, LifeNews Less Credible than Chinese State-Run Media](#), February 2022

NewsGuard is not qualified to determine the veracity of any news, let alone determine the truth for millions of American school children.

The partnership between NewsGuard and AFT is equally troubling when examining the AFT. This union has demonstrated a bias for the radical left's ideology. Throughout the last two years, AFT has fought feverishly against in-person instruction despite the devastating consequences of remote learning for students' physical, mental, and developmental wellbeing.⁴ In addition to harmful advocacy, the AFT was involved with influencing U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention school reopening guidance in a manner that was "uncommon" and was "intended to make it more likely that schools would close to in-person learning."⁵ Moreover, AFT has donated overwhelmingly to Democrat candidates, and its President, Randi Weingarten, even appeared with the Democratic nominee for Virginia Governor on the final day of the 2021 election.

As members of Congress, it is our duty to investigate these efforts to politicize classrooms across the United States with a biased misinformation rating system. We hope you agree that American parents and students deserve full transparency and that this extends to the information delivered to students. Since NewsGuard's entire business model is premised on determining credibility and providing transparency, we trust we will receive your full cooperation.⁶ With that in mind, we request that you reply to the following questions and requests for information within 30 days:

1. Please describe the events that led to the partnership between AFT and NewsGuard and provide all documentation and correspondence related thereto.
2. Please provide copies of the agreement between AFT and NewsGuard.
3. Were local school districts given an opportunity to weigh in on the decision to include the NewsGuard extension in the classroom?
4. Were parents given an opportunity to weigh in on the decision to include the NewsGuard extension in the classroom? If so, please provide evidence of that opportunity. Please provide all documentation related to the decision to afford or not afford parents the opportunity to weigh in on the decision to include the NewsGuard extension in the classroom.
5. Will parents be able to opt out of having this extension included on their children's school-issued device? If so, how? If not, why not?
6. Approximately how many students' devices will be equipped with the NewsGuard extension as a result of your agreement?
7. How will AFT and NewsGuard educate parents regarding the use of the NewsGuard extension?
8. Please describe in detail the process and mechanisms used by NewsGuard to determine the veracity of information. Please provide any documentation related to the process and mechanisms used by NewsGuard to determine the veracity of information.

⁴ [The Consequences of Remote and Hybrid Instruction During the Pandemic](#), May 2022

⁵ [Interim Findings: Union Officials Wrote Key Portions of the Biden Administration's School Reopening Guidance](#) March 2022

⁶ <https://www.newsguardtech.com/ratings/rating-process-criteria/>

9. If NewsGuard has to issue a correction of a rating, such as in the case of the *New York Post's* story on Hunter Biden's laptop or the *Buzzfeed* publication of the discredited Steele Dossier, how do they plan on notifying students who may have visited that story and received an incorrect rating from NewsGuard?
10. Please provide a list and description of all federal or state contracts NewsGuard have entered into since 2020.

Thank you for your attention to this letter.

Sincerely,



Jim Banks
Chairman
Republican Study Committee



Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
House Committee on Education and Labor



Burgess Owens
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary,
and Secondary Education