

# Democrat Google curbs politics discussion among employees

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## KEY POINTS

- Google has been moderating and removing employees' internal election-related conversations, CNBC has

learned.

- Despite the warnings, employees continued posting memes related to the election and criticizing the

company's policies.

- The company is taking expanded action to temper internal political discussions during the election as it

reiterates "the role we play," which includes being a trusted source of information for voters.

Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google.

Anindito Mukherjee | Bloomberg | Getty Images

Google has been moderating and removing employees' internal election-related conversations, CNBC has learned.

Ahead of Tuesday's U.S. elections, Google executives warned employees to keep political opinions and statements away from a popular internal discussion forum called Memegen, according to correspondence viewed by CNBC. Despite the warnings, employees continued posting memes related to the election and criticizing the company's policies on Tuesday.

The most recent leadership guidance shows the company is taking expanded action to temper internal political discussions. Google CEO Sundar Pichai on Monday sent a memo reminding employees that people turn to the company's services for "high-quality and reliable information." That includes through the company's Google Search, Google News and YouTube services.10 pt

"Whomever the voters entrust, let's remember the role we play at work, through the products we build and as a business: to be a trusted source of information to people of every background and belief," Pichai wrote. "We will and must maintain that."

As one of the most important tech leaders in the U.S., Pichai himself has been pulled into the broader political discussions of late. Republican nominee

Donald Trump claimed to have multiple [phone calls](#) with Pichai in recent weeks.

Google has been cracking down on internal conversations since 2019 when the company [introduced a policy](#) barring employees from making statements that “insult, demean, or humiliate” their colleagues. The rules also discouraged employees from engaging in a “raging debate over politics or the latest news story.”

That policy signaled a significant culture shift for the company. Some employees [pushed back](#) against the restrictions, saying they were too broad, and in 2020, the company said it was expanding its internal content moderation practices, requiring employees to more actively moderate internal discussions, [CNBC found](#) at the time.

Since 2021, Google has dealt with internal dissent regarding Project Nimbus, which is a \$1.2 billion joint contract with [Amazon](#) to provide the Israeli government and military with cloud computing and AI services. Google briefly [shut down](#) an internal message board this March after employees posted comments about the company’s Nimbus contract.

In a 2019 settlement, the U.S. National Labor Board [ordered Google](#) to post a list of employee rights at its headquarters that included the right to discuss workplace conditions. That came after a former Google employee filed a complaint alleging that the company restricted free speech and fired him for expressing conservative views, which Google refuted.

The company declined to comment.

## **Banning political discussions**

Google announced more updates to its Memegen guidelines in September that included broadening the forum's restrictions against political discussions, according to internal documents viewed by CNBC. The company also said it would ban employees from the platform if they violate policies three times, and Google said that it would also use artificial intelligence technology to better detect violative content.

“Memegen will no longer allow posting of personal political opinions, including national policy/events, geopolitical content (eg, international relations, military conflicts, economic actions, territorial disputes, and other international affairs unrelated to Google), or sharing related news with or without commentary,” one document said.

Political debates have driven the “vast majority” of content removals, one document of the expanded policies said.

“Memegen isn’t a place for personal political opinions or statements,” reads a yellow banner that Google recently added at the top of Memegen, according to images viewed by CNBC.

One employee wrote that Google’s internal community management team, or ICMT, took down their meme, which they didn’t feel was violative. Many memes viewed by CNBC included messages such as “sending support” and “encouragement” to fellow employees. Others poked fun at the company’s expanded policy and the ICMT.

“This meme is a political statement please report to ICMT immediately,” one meme said. Another read: “Make Election Day a holiday to give ICMT a break.” Another meme just said “aaaaaaaa” overlaid on a black void.

Read Google CEO Sundar Pichai’s full memo to employees below

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Hi Googlers,

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Tomorrow is election day here and many in the U.S. will be heading to the polls to vote for everything

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from school board to judges to the Congress and President.

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Teams across Google and YouTube have been working hard to make sure our platforms provide voters

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with high-quality and reliable information, just as we've done for so many other elections around the

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world — in fact, dozens of countries have held major, hotly contested elections this year, from France to

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India to the UK to Mexico and many more, with well over a billion people casting votes in 2024.

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We should be proud of our work, and also of our teams' efforts to keep campaigns secure, to deliver

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accurate information on where and how to vote, and to provide digital advertising solutions to campaigns.

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Thanks to everyone working around the clock on these efforts throughout the campaign season and as

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votes are tallied.

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As with other elections, the outcome will be a major topic of conversation in living rooms and other places around the world. And of course, the outcome will have important consequences. Whomever the voters entrust, let's remember the role we play at work, through the products we build and as a business: to be a trusted source of information to people of every background and belief. We will and must maintain that.

In that spirit, it's important that everyone continue to follow our Community Guidelines and Personal Political Activity Policy.

Beyond election day, our work to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful will continue. AI has given us a profound opportunity to make progress on that mission, build great products and partnerships, drive innovation, and make significant contributions to national and local economies. Our company is at its best when we're focused on that.

Thanks,

Sundar

WATCH: [Google: More than a quarter of new code is now AI-generated](#)

