


Trump admin files formal complaint against Facebook for discriminatory policy

 Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg testifies before a joint hearing of the Commerce and Judiciary Committees on Capitol Hill in Washington, Tuesday, April 10, 2018, about the use of Facebook data to target American voters in the 2016 election. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg testifies before a joint hearing of the Commerce and Judiciary Committees on Capitol Hill in Washington, Tuesday, April 10, 2018, about the use of Facebook data to target American voters in the 2016 election. (AP Photo/Alex ... [more](#) >

By [Stephen Dinan](#) -

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The Trump administration announced a fair housing discrimination complaint against social media giant [Facebook](#) on Friday, saying the way the company targets ads can be used to screen out people based on race, sex or other protected categories.


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The complaint goes to the heart of Facebook's business model, which depends on being able to offer advertisers micro-targeting.


“Facebook mines extensive user data and classifies its users based on protected characteristics. Facebook's ad targeting tools then invite advertisers to express unlawful preferences by suggesting discriminatory options,” the Housing and Urban Development Department said in the complaint.

Among those options are physical disabilities, parents with children and even religious practices — advertisers are allowed to show their ads only to people Facebook deems interested in “Jesus” or the


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 First-graders in Caryn Bednarek's class at Queen of All Saints Catholic School enjoy a snack and listen quietly as she goes over their new classroom procedures on the first day of the 2018-2019 school year Wednesday, Aug. 15, 2018, in Michigan City, Ind. (Kelley Smith/The News-Dispatch via AP) ** FILE **

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 U.S. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis, left, and Argentina's Defense Minister Oscar Raul Aguad shake hands in Buenos Aires, Argentina Wednesday, Aug. 15, 2018. Mattis is on an official visit to several American

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countries. (AP Photo/Natasha Pisarenko)


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“Christian Church,” for example.

Those practices could violate the Civil Rights Act, HUD said in the complaint, dated August 13.

The government had begun an investigation in 2016 after learning that [Facebook](#) allowed people running ads to narrow down those who can see their advertising based on protected categories.

[Facebook](#) didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment, but has previously said its policies tell advertisers not to discriminate. The company also insisted it had safeguards to stop advertisers from selecting based on race or ethnicity

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