

Sundar Pichai, CEO, Google
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway
Mountain View, CA 94043

October 24, 2024

In the wake of two historically catastrophic hurricanes in the U.S.,¹ and [a large spike in hurricane-related disinformation](#), including content spread and hosted [on Google](#), we are writing as a coalition of environmental and civil rights organizations and 41,185 individual signatories to ask that Google comprehensively enforce its existing policy to demonetize climate disinformation. As has been well documented, climate disinformation is intentionally spread as part of a concerted campaign by the fossil fuel industry to prevent a transition from fossil fuels.²

Announced in 2021, Google’s policy applies to “[Google advertisers, publishers and YouTube creators](#),” prohibiting “ads for, and monetization of, content that contradicts well-established scientific consensus around the existence and causes of climate change.”³ Importantly, Google made this policy change not only because advertisers had asked for it, but also because of the company’s own commitment to climate action. We are urging Google to enforce the policy thoroughly and immediately to ensure it is credible, as we see climate change adversely affecting communities right now.⁴

While we have seen initial steps in the right direction from Google this year, such as demonetizing some of the Heartland Institute’s climate denial content, its demonetization policy needs comprehensive and thorough enforcement, as well as explicit expansion to adequately address the evolving forms of climate disinfo.⁵ Our partners have continued to find ads on Heartland Institute content and additional outlets spreading climate disinformation on YouTube and Google.⁶

¹ [“Helene, Milton losses expected to surpass “truly historic” \\$50 billion each,”](#) MSNBC, accessed Oct. 17, 2024.

² [“Heartland Institute,”](#) DeSmog, accessed Oct. 10th, 2024; [“New Joint Bicameral Staff Report Reveals Big Oil’s Campaign of Climate Denial, Disinformation, and Doublespeak,”](#) *The Committee on Oversight and Accountability Democrats*, Apr. 30th, 2024.

³ [“Updating our ads and monetization policies on climate change - Google Ads Help,”](#) Google, Oct. 7th, 2024.

⁴ [“Global heating makes hurricanes like Helene twice as likely, data shows,”](#) *The Guardian*, Oct. 8th, 2024; [“Scientists Say Climate Change Made Hurricane Milton More Destructive,”](#) *Weather.com*, Oct. 12th, 2024.

⁵ [“The New Climate Denial — Center for Countering Digital Hate,”](#) CCDH, Jan. 16th, 2024.

⁶ [“Google demonetized The Heartland Institute in June. Here are 4 more channels that violate its climate misinformation policy,”](#) *Media Matters for America*, Jul. 31st, 2024

We are urgently asking Google to fully enforce its existing policy and immediately and permanently demonetize Heartland Institute and all other outlets that continue to spread climate disinformation on YouTube.

Over the last year, members of the Climate Action Against Disinformation (CAAD) coalition have added to the wealth of evidence showing Google's continued role in amplifying and monetizing climate denial content, including the following:

- A [Check My Ads report](#) (Sept. 26th, 2024) demonstrated how ad exchanges have directly funded climate disinformation. The report found that **Google’s ad exchange continues to monetize all three of the websites that Check My Ads tracked, which promote climate denial content – [townhall.com](#), [foxnews.com](#), and [theepochtimes.com](#) – despite policies that forbid it.**⁷
- A [Friends of the Earth and Dewey Square briefing](#) (Sept. 25th, 2024) revealed a Russian influence campaign that funds influencers who spread climate denial content. The report found that **YouTube still allows for the monetization of this content** on their platform, even after the media group’s connection to the Russian influence operation was revealed. **Climate disinformation on YouTube from Tenet-associated content creators has been viewed nearly 4 million times in the past year.**
- A [report from Global Witness](#) (Sept. 23rd, 2024) found that **Google has monetized The Epoch Times, a climate denier outlet, to the tune of \$1.5 million in joint revenue over the last 12 months.**
- A report from [Media Matters for America](#) (July 31st, 2024) proved that despite Google’s alleged demonetization of Heartland Institute, **YouTube has continued to run Heartland videos with ads**, as well exposing four more egregious climate deniers – Tony Heller, PragerU, Jordan Petersen, and John Stossel, who are still being monetized on the platform.
- Research [from the Center for Countering Digital Hate](#) (Jan. 16th, 2024) found that Google and YouTube amplify and monetize newer types of climate disinformation that seek to attack climate scientists, downplay impacts of climate change, and discredit proven solutions. These new climate disinfo narratives now account for a greater percentage of climate disinfo than traditional climate denial, which seeks to convince people that climate change is not real, on YouTube.
- A [follow-up letter from the Center for Countering Digital Hate and 23 other organizations](#) (April 22nd, 2024) **urged Google to update its demonetization policies to “explicitly encompass assertions which fall under categories of “new climate denial,” including claims that “the impacts of global warming are beneficial or harmless” and “climate solutions won’t work” that contradict the scientific consensus.”**

⁷ [“Unreliable and harmful claims - Publisher Policies Help,” Google](#), accessed Oct. 10th, 2024.

- An earlier report from [Friends of the Earth and Dewey Square](#) (Oct. 20th, 2022) found that **Google was the largest ad network used by climate disinformation sites**. 49 percent of the climate denial websites studied were funded through the Google ad network, earning a possible \$7 to \$8 million over the course of the year.

As evidenced by the above research and reporting, Google ads are directly contributing to the spread of outright lies about our planet's changing climate – with dire impacts. This disinformation translates into real consequences for our environment and human health. The Earth and its oceans are again breaking historic levels of temperature rise in 2024, and communities around the world, from North Carolina and Florida to Chile and India, are experiencing catastrophic damage from extreme weather in unlikely geographies.⁸

In advance of the international climate change negotiations at the 29th Conference of the Parties to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 29) in November, we urge Google to protect the integrity of our information environment, something its CEO [Sundar Pichai](#) [referenced as its goal at the United Nations in September](#). We urge immediate and thorough action to end Google's monetization of accounts that spread and profit from climate disinformation. Attached, please find lists of the 41,185 individuals who are also urging Google to enforce its policies and demonetize climate disinformation.

We request a meeting with Google's trust and safety team to discuss these issues, and ask for a written explanation of how they plan to enforce the demonetization policy. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Accountable Tech
Action Center on Race & the Economy
Center for Countering Digital Hate
Check My Ads
ClimateVoice, a project of Tides Center
Ekō
Friends of the Earth
Greenpeace USA
Kairos Fellowship
The Tech Oversight Project
UltraViolet
Union of Concerned Scientists

⁸ ["How climate change worsens heatwaves, droughts, wildfires and floods,"](#) *BBC*, June 17th, 2024; ["Chileans evacuate after heavy rainfall floods streets,"](#) *Reuters*, June 21st, 2024; ["Extreme heat has killed more than 100 people in India since March,"](#) *NBC News*, Jun. 21st, 2024.