October 28, 2020

Below is our COVID-19 Update for October 28, 2020:

**Both the Senate and House are in recess.**

**Congress**

**Senate**

* The Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee held a hearing today entitled “Does Section 230’s Sweeping Immunity Enable Big Tech Bad Behavior?” Republican members of the Committee focused on claims of anti-conservative bias on online platforms, citing Twitter’s fact checking of President Trump. Democrats expressed concerns that Republicans held the hearing so close to the election in order to influence electoral outcomes and pressure the CEOs to change their policies. The hearing also discussed the need to reform Section 230, content moderation policies, and foreign election interference. All three CEOs refuted claims of political bias on their platforms and assured the Senators of their commitment to combatting election interference and misinformation. Our coverage of the hearing is [here](https://ustoa.com/r/ustoa-filemanager/source/resources/2020-10-28-senate-commerce-section-230-hearing.pdf). The witnesses included:
	+ Mr. Jack Dorsey, Chief Executive Officer, Twitter
	+ Mr. Sundar Pichai, Chief Executive Officer, Alphabet Inc., Google
	+ Mr. Mark Zuckerberg, Chief Executive Officer, Facebook
* Sens. Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and Ron Johnson (R-WI) introduced the Visa Security Expansion Act to expand the foreign visa screening process by the Department of Homeland Security. Sen. Hassan said that the bill will protect the U.S. from the threat of ISIS “by expanding the number of counterterrorism agents who aid the State Department in making decisions about whether to grant U.S. visas to foreign nationals.” Text of the legislation is not yet publicly available.

**House**

* Reps. Will Hurd (R-TX), Michael McCaul (R-TX), Henry Cuellar (D-TX), and Vicente Gonzalez (D-TX) sent a letter to U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin asking the Administration to push the Mexican government to remove regulations that would impede digital trade in financial services, specifically cloud computing. The letter is [here](https://ustoa.com/r/ustoa-filemanager/source/resources/lighthizer-digital-trades-letter.pdf).
* Reps. Jahana Hayes (D-CT), Gregorio Sablan (D-MP), and Bobby Scott (D-VA) introduced the Save Education Jobs Act ([H.R. 8691](https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/8691?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22congressId%3A116+AND+billStatus%3A%5C%22Introduced%5C%22%22%5D%7D&s=1&r=10)) to address problems facing students, the education workforce, and the economy due to COVID-19.
	+ According to a [press release](https://hayes.house.gov/media/press-releases/hayes-introduces-legislation-save-nearly-4-million-education-jobs-spur-economic), the bill would establish an Education Jobs Fund to provide $261B for the education workforce. These funds would go to maintaining jobs despite budget cuts, hiring more teachers, and supporting professional development and mental health services.

**Administration**

* The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) will hold a vote next month on whether the entire 30 MHz upper band of the 5.9 GHz band will be available for automotive uses. The upper band has previously been reserved for transportation safety uses. This plan is opposed by the Department of Transportation (DOT), bipartisan lawmakers, and transportation safety advocates.
	+ Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao recently sent a letter to the Department of Commerce expressing her opposition to this plan, claiming that the FCC “undervalues the safety benefits of this spectrum band.” The letter is [here](https://ustoa.com/r/ustoa-filemanager/source/resources/chao-fcc-letter.pdf).
* The Department of Justice called on Congress to completely eliminate Section 230 liability protections and start over with a new legislative solution. Published reports indicate that the Department expressed this sentiment in a letter that specifically questions Twitter and Facebook’s approach to the New York Post article about Hunter Biden and comes amid an increased Congressional focus on Section 230. The letter is not yet publicly available.
* The Administration’s Operation Warp Speed has agreed to invest $375M to purchase 300,000 doses of pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly’s COVID-19 antibody drug.
	+ Eli Lilly has pledged to produce one million doses of the drug, bamlanivimab, by the end of the year and Operation Warp Speed can purchase an additional 650,000 doses for $812.5M. The first 100,000 doses will be ready to ship within days of a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) emergency use authorization, which is expected soon.

**Other News**

* The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development released a [report](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2functad.org%2fsystem%2ffiles%2fofficial-document%2fdiaeiainf2020d4_en.pdf%3futm_source%3dUNCTAD%2bMedia%2bContacts%26utm_campaign%3d9f02806fc5-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_06_10_02_38_COPY_01%26utm_medium%3demail%26utm_term%3d0_1b47b7abd3-9f02806fc5-70608609&c=E,1,7LICFBJjDEYtCvNHWZmE_OIXUI3LbvvaD_fwjdsIpggeVGMdQ0xMoSMrCGWA_UQI38mltkifMO8nN_TY9bv8-0zK5byPnGsO3pTQYry8LyZWgJo,&typo=1) describing the effects of COVID-19 on foreign direct investment (FDI) and globalization. The report found that global FDI decreased by 49% in the first half of 2020.
	+ The report also found that FDI decreased by 75% into developed economies and 16% into developing economies.
* The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health released a [study](https://npli.sph.harvard.edu/crisis-research/aviation-public-health-initiative-aphi/) which found that risk of COVID-19 transmission on airplanes is low as long as social distancing, masks, and air filtration are utilized. The study said that transmission risk on planes is lower than the risk in grocery stores and indoor restaurants.
* Florida Governor Ron DeSantis announced that he will reopen the cruise industry in Florida, claiming that the cruise industry has returned to Europe without any COVID-19 outbreaks and that Florida has the rapid testing capability to reopen cruises. Governor DeSantis also said that President Trump supports the plan.
	+ As a reminder, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) extended no sail order on cruise travel is set to expire on October 31.
* Raytheon Technologies will cut 20,000 jobs due to COVID-19 and the company’s merger with United Technologies. These cuts represent 20% of the commercial aerospace workforce at the Collins Aerospace and Pratt & Whitney divisions.
* Boeing announced that its third quarter revenue decreased by 29%, likely due to COVID-19 and the grounding of the 737 MAX. Boeing will also eliminate an additional 7,000 jobs by the end of 2021. In 2020, Boeing has already eliminated 19,000 jobs.
* General Dynamics reported a 3.4% decrease in third quarter revenue and an 11% decrease in operating earnings. The largest drop, 21%, was seen in the aerospace sector.
* The World Trade Organization (WTO) held its Heads of Delegation meeting today to choose its next Director General. The choice was between former Nigerian Finance Minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala or current South Korean Trade Minister Yoo Myung-hee.
	+ Okonjo-Iweala received the most support, but the U.S. vetoed the selection of Okonjo-Iweala and continued to support Yoo Myung-hee. Members must reach consensus and a formal decision in the General Council meeting on November 9.
* Bloomberg New Energy Finance released a [report](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fabout.bnef.com%2fnew-energy-outlook%2f&c=E,1,SoABsjhuksVbaHzWCk27BZXt3kenjP3_TE8lH7KMVPKd_xdD6gdgjxwm7I0o6ePsNRtbJd2y_Twp79VoZOpdzhbVlexNUexVOSWTIwKHhw,,&typo=1) which indicates that energy-related emissions have begun to permanently decline since 2019. The report found that even though emissions levels will increase after the 10% drop in 2020 due to COVID-19, they will never reach 2019 levels. It also found that levels will instead fall by 0.7% each year from 2027-2050, during which global demand will shift from oil to wind and solar.
* In its [report](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.uschamber.com%2fsites%2fdefault%2ffiles%2fctec_techupgrade_transportation_final.pdf&c=E,1,3ztDtbG2fALgxCL0gAE3CYHeVk7G57BI2k1cW7nxibZ81nKGK4ywQU-i3OVH2G33NPbKR8PWRM-xircjGcTPJ3Q9MVp_Pta92KX8AcsMOcfVYBFZwGULaW1_&typo=1) on the future of transportation, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce expressed its opposition to bans on federal agencies using Chinese drones. The report claims that these bans will ultimately harm the U.S. economy and competitiveness, and that other solutions should be considered to improve drone security.
* A German member of the European Parliament, Patrick Breyer, accused Facebook and Google of violating the European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) by screening private messages for illegal content, claiming that it constitutes censorship. A legal analysis of the complaint will be completed within weeks.

**Federal Register Notices**

* The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced a virtual meeting of the National Advisory Council that will take place on November 17-18 from 12:30-5:00pm ET. The notice can be found [here](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.federalregister.gov%2fdocuments%2f2020%2f10%2f28%2f2020-23956%2fnational-advisory-council-meeting&c=E,1,34fTxufeBKAuT7YfulIRMJRPmYc67qu0fdh-fW6zGnlV7jjrhssmR98hxAASfLV1UGRcEokToxmmi51wkmD5rNpue_u90JOcWyQRZzDtKIr1TO8g9A,,&typo=1).
* The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) announced that a meeting of the President's National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee (NSTAC) will be held on November 12 from 12:30-4:15pm ET. Registration is required by November 5. The notice can be found [here](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.federalregister.gov%2fdocuments%2f2020%2f10%2f28%2f2020-23835%2fnotice-of-presidents-national-security-telecommunications-advisory-committee-meeting&c=E,1,FpG-uHbfTRmTcT3i4s8spNYzMtXrcloPiPfwlsrQpMJrOPN-m4TTNUDc9oR-ZohUOdlXUSLCapjyI3Ho7VBFS1dmRKPKLH_jBj4qJNG3mdcP5WB7RkJKUfs0FA,,&typo=1).
* The Emerging Technology Technical Advisory Committee (ETTAC) will hold a meeting on November 9 from 1:00-3:00pm ET. The meeting will cover ETTAC Structure and Work Plan and Emerging Technologies Trends. The notice can be found [here](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.federalregister.gov%2fdocuments%2f2020%2f10%2f28%2f2020-23839%2femerging-technology-technical-advisory-committee-notice-of-open-meeting&c=E,1,x3dSbr5QNgEjZ6yGMMly80_O1nhjJuCH6uKYmNFFI4gmGp9kih-jT057znyaAOKngbuWGXpU-t20N533w2oVR-qeIR6vUmrdlgueCYmDMw,,&typo=1).