

BIDEN'S BITCH - GOOGLE RUNS THE BIDEN AND OBAMA WHITE HOUSE

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Google's deep White House ties: Biden's Big Tech sherpa spent two decades working for the search engine giant and now pushes for legislation that would devastate business enemy Apple's bottom line

- Alan Davidson name-checked reforms of the Open Apps Market Act in a call with reporters - a bill that would eviscerate Apple's control over its own app store
- 'When you hire the former head of Google's lobbying shop, you let the fox in the henhouse,' said one staffer who called his role a 'huge conflict'
- Meanwhile, former White House chief of staff Ron Klain this week took a job at law firm O'Melveny, which counts Google as a client

By [MORGAN PHILLIPS](#).

[Google](#) has deep ties to the Biden [White House](#) - which some staffers are now calling a 'huge conflict'.

The official heading off the president's Big Tech policy spent nearly two decades working for Google and companies tied to the search engine giant, and now pushes for legislation that targets Google's primary business enemy, Apple.

Meanwhile, former White House chief of staff Ron Klain this week took a job at law firm O'Melveny, which counts Google as a client.

Alan Davidson, assistant Commerce secretary, has led the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) since January 2022. In February of this year, Davidson's NTIA released a report that called for increased competition and an end to self-preferencing in the app marketplace.

Critics say the proposals amount to a slap on the wrist for Google but would be hugely damaging for Google's top competitor, Apple.

They say Davidson could also have a hand in the Biden administration's hesitance to put anti-trust legislation front and center of its agenda.



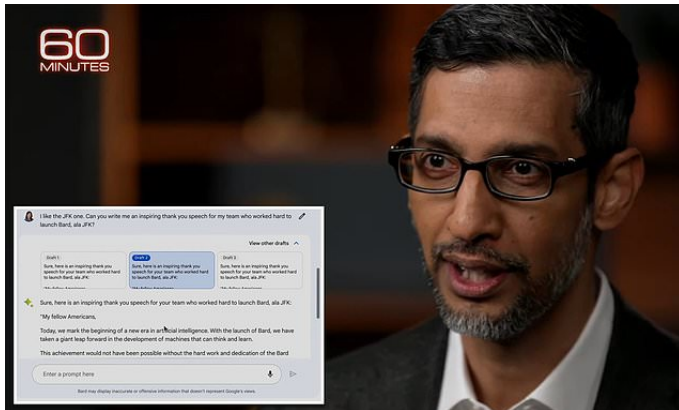
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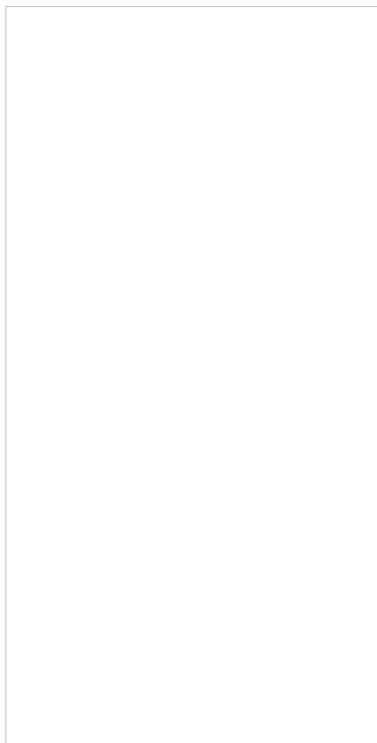
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'Davidson had a clear hand in Biden's tech agenda - his ties to Google are a huge conflict and likely a reason why the Biden administration has not been more successful on anti-trust.

'When you hire the former head of Google's lobbying shop, you let the fox in the henhouse,' said one former Democratic congressional staffer.

'I think the revolving door between the Biden administration and the tech is pervasive. And Alan Davidson is one of the big examples of that,' said another Democratic operative.

'Any time you have big tech going into Biden world and Biden people going into big tech, it just ensures that those companies have more access and influence.'



Davidson himself name-checked reforms of the Open Apps Market Act in a call with reporters - a bill that would eviscerate Apple's control over its own app store.

It would hurt Google's control over its Android app store as well, but on a far smaller scale - Apple generated \$72 billion from its app store in 2020, nearly twice as much as Google generated from its Google Play store.

Both Apple and Google take nearly 30 percent of every app store purchase.

'I would note that, you know, many of our recommendations would be answered... and addressed by legislation such as the Open App Markets Act, as it was introduced last year. So we'll be looking forward to seeing what comes this year,' Davidson said after the report was released in February.



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While he said the report was not an endorsement of any specific bill, its proposals largely mirrored the bipartisan Open Apps Market Act.

'Consumers, for the most part, can't get apps outside of the app store model... This means that innovators have very limited avenues for reaching consumers, and consumers have very limited choice or no choice about where to get their apps,' said Davidson.

While today iPhone users can only purchase apps from the Apple app store, under the Open App Markets Act Apple would be required to allow third-party app stores on its phones.

But the Open Apps Market Act is only one bill in a broader package - it focuses narrowly on self-preferencing behavior in the app marketplace, leaving out other online platforms for self-preferencing.

'The fact that you have a former Google exec appointed to lead the agency that is taking a stance on a bill that would heavily favor Google is super problematic,' said the former Democrat staffer.

'President Biden has an agenda that wants to hold tech accountable,' the source said. 'But there are forces within the agencies that are actively pushing against that agenda. And that's because they've either worked for or plan to work for or are close friends with, you know, big tech executives.'

With self-preferencing in the digital space, Google dominated the digital ad marketplace – bringing in a projected \$168 billion in 2022 compared to Apple's \$7 billion.

Apple's app store is already far more restricted than Google's, having tough guidelines for the applications it allows on the platform. Should the Open Apps Market Act become law, Apple and Google would essentially give up control of their app stores.

Meta, Amazon and Google focused most of their lobbying efforts on opposing AICOA. For Apple, AICOA and Open Apps Market Act were tied for the top bills they lobbied against.

The American Innovation and Choice Online Act would prevent all tech giants from using any of their platforms to disadvantage competitors - Google, Meta, Amazon, Apple and the like.

From 2005 to 2012, Davidson ran Google's public policy team in the U.S. He was Google's first policy staffer in DC, overseeing the launch and expansion of Google's DC office.

Under Davidson's leadership, Google registered its first in-house federal lobbyists and exponentially expanded its lobbying operation. The Center for Responsive Politics observed in 2010 that Google had 'gone from a veritable non-entity in the early decade to one of the largest lobbying forces among its peers.'

Under Davidson, Google launched its political action committee, NETPAC, which Davidson sat on the board of.

In May 2010 White House deputy technology chief Andrew McLaughlin was reprimanded for violating the Obama administration's ethics pledge after emails became public showing McLaughlin communicating with former colleagues at Google, including Davidson.

Davidson and McLaughlin exchanged emails on McLaughlin's personal email account regarding potential fallout from comments McLaughlin made on net neutrality. Davidson pledged to 'tee up' an advocacy group to defend him and to talk to reporters.

Davidson himself was personally registered to lobby for Google from 2007 through 2010. He lobbied Congress and a variety of executive branch offices, including NTIA.

As of May 2021, Davidson had about \$15,000 in Google parent company Alphabet stock, which he was required to divest from upon taking the NTIA position.

Between 2014 and 2018, Davidson worked for the New America Foundation, a think tank that received \$21 million in funding from Google and its then-CEO Eric Schmidt.

Prior to joining Google, Davidson spent 10 years as the associate director for the Center for Democracy & Technology. As of 2021, Google was one of CDT's top three largest annual donors.

Last Congress [advocates criticized](#) the White House for failing to utilize Democratic control of the White House and both chambers on Capitol Hill to prioritize legislation to take on Big Tech.

Biden waited until January of this year to make one of his most pointed calls yet in an op-ed he penned directing Congress to pass legislation to rein in tech platforms.

He first called for privacy protections that limit data collection and ban targeted advertising for kids and called for reform of Section 230 - which grants social media platforms immunity for what users post on their sites while preserving their ability to moderate content.

Referencing a line he made in both last year's and again in this year's State of the Union address, Biden said: 'We must hold social-media companies accountable for the experiment they are running on our children for profit.'

'Ban targeted advertising to children and impose stricter limits on the personal data the companies collect on all of us,' Biden said in his 2023 State of the Union Tuesday night.