

Sen. Warner Responds to FEC Online Political Ads Announcement

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WASHINGTON – Today, U.S. Sen. Mark R. Warner (D-VA), Vice Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, issued the following statement in response to the Federal Election Commission (FEC)'s announcement that commissioners have approved a Draft Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on two proposals dealing with disclosure rules for online political advertisements:

“While I applaud the FEC for moving forward today, my hope was that the simple and overdue act of strengthening these disclaimer rules would have been completed by now. The Commission’s current plan, which contemplates yet another round of comments, means rules concerning online political ads remain woefully behind the commonsense standards we apply to political ads on TV and other media – just as the country begins the primary season for the upcoming 2018 mid-term elections.

“Congress must recognize that our current laws are simply not adequate to deal with the national security threats we face from foreign adversaries like Russia, and other bad actors. While no one law alone will completely protect our democracy, updating our election laws is a simple and important start. Bipartisan legislation like the *Honest Ads Act* is needed to bring true parity between digital political ads and ads running on broadcast, satellite, and cable services.”

Russia attempted to influence the 2016 presidential election by buying and placing political ads on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Google. However, Americans had no way of knowing who was behind the ads, because, unlike radio and television ads, the FEC has exempted large swathes of online ads from general requirements to include disclaimers about who is responsible for the content.

In November 2017, Senator Warner [led a number of his colleagues](#) in calling on the FEC to take immediate action to improve transparency for political advertisements online. That effort followed Senator Warner’s introduction in October 2017 of *the Honest Ads Act*, [bipartisan legislation](#) that would prevent

foreign actors from influencing our elections by ensuring that political ads sold online are covered by the same rules as ads sold on TV, radio, and satellite.

[According to the FEC](#), the public will now have 60 days to provide comments on two alternative proposals, one Republican-sponsored and one Democrat-sponsored, to amend FEC regulations concerning disclaimers on public communications on the internet that contain express advocacy, solicit contributions, or are made by political committees.

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