

Thank you, Commissioner Boykin, and the Board of Commissioners for inviting me to speak today. My name is Jake Warsaw and I am the Regional Operations Coordinator at the Chicago Anti-Defamation League. ADL is a civil rights organization founded in 1913 that works to fight anti-Semitism and secure just and fair treatment to all. This morning, with respect to your time, I'll try to speak briefly about the rise in anti-Semitic incidents we've seen over the past several months, and how extremists use social media to spread hate.

Today, hate manifests itself in many different forms. Online and on social media, we've seen a rise in hate speech, harassment, threats and even warning signs for violence to come, growing at an unprecedented rate. While cyber bullying is not a new phenomenon, the volume of attacks made online, as well as the coordinated focus of these attacks, is certainly rising. Much of this hatred is directed at the Jewish community. Some of it stems from anti-Semitism that flourished online during the 2016 presidential campaign, along with xenophobia and racism. The growth of the alt right and far-right wing extremist organizations, often spreading their messages and coordinating their activities online, has led to an increase of harassment and racist attacks.

In 2016, the total number of anti-Semitic incidents we tracked increased 34% from the previous year, to 1,266 total incidents up from 942. Perhaps more disturbingly, in Quarter One, 2017, anti-Semitic incidents increased 86% over the same period of the previous year. Many of these incidents include online threats and harassment.

Because of the intensity and volume of incidents we saw on social media last year, ADL created the Task Force on Harassment and Journalism. This Task Force studied key words and phrases used by extremists on Twitter, as well as interviews with targeted journalists, to draw conclusions about the amount of hate speech and extremism being distributed online. Based on a broad set of keywords designed by ADL to capture anti-Semitic language, there were 2.6 million tweets containing language frequently found in anti-Semitic speech between August 2015 and July 2016. These tweets had an estimated 10 billion impressions, which may contribute to reinforcing and normalizing anti-Semitic language on a massive scale. At least 800 journalists received anti-Semitic tweets with an estimated reach of 45 million impressions. The top 10 most targeted journalists, all of whom are Jewish, received 83% of these anti-Semitic tweets. But the targets are often regular Americans, unequipped for a coordinated storm of hate speech.

In Whitefish, Montana, a Jewish real estate agent named Tanya Gersh and her family became the public targets of white supremacist political leader Richard Spencer, and avowed neo-Nazi and creator of the Daily Stormer website, Andrew Anglin. The result was a nightmare for the Gersh family, as Anglin encouraged his online readers to harass the Jews of Whitefish with hundreds of threatening phone calls,

emails, text and voice messages, including threats made to Tanya's 12 year old son. It is especially disturbing how easily Anglin and his extremist supporters were able to coordinate a campaign of harassment and intimidation using the internet to spread the Gersh family's personal information and call for an assault of verbal and written torment.

There are ways for us to fight back. We know that children can be hit especially hard by cyber bullying and harassment from their peers. We have coordinated tireless efforts to bring diversity and tolerance trainings to local students, parents and school faculty members. Our local education team and their trained facilitators have conducted 60 programs this year alone, with advanced curriculum on responding to cyber bullying and online hate.

We are working closely with the governor, state's attorney and elected officials to help bring anti-bias and extremism trainings to Illinois law enforcement officers. We maintain a close working relationship with the FBI and hold quarterly Law Enforcement Advisory Committee meetings, where local and federal agents and officers meet with ADL experts to learn more about how we can assist each other in combating hate.

ADL's Center on Extremism monitors and studies extremist organizations online, tracking their activity and alerting the relevant authorities. In Silicon Valley, our Director of Technology and Society, Brittan Heller, maintains a strong relationship with tech giants like Google, Facebook and Twitter. Our partnership with these social media giants is an important part of monitoring hate speech on social media networks.

But more can be done. We will keep fighting for educational programming that celebrates diversity, respect and tolerance in our schools. We will continue to track and expose extremists online, relying upon our expert colleagues across the country working with web based platforms. We will further develop our relationship with local government and law enforcement, creating clear channels of communication and information sharing, allowing us to find violent extremists before they find us.

Thank you for Cook County's leadership on this issue and making it clear that Cook County is safe and welcoming for all members of any community.

Thank you.