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CENSORSHIP

Mastercard Backtracks After Getting Caught Using Ad Dollars To Censor Conservatives

BY: BETH BRELJE
APRIL 03, 2025
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📷 [MASTERCARD/ISpot](#)

The \$500 billion corporation that was ‘instrumental in the formation’ of the GARM censorship machine has apparently reversed course.



BETH BRELJE

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With persuasion from a shareholder and attorneys at the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), Mastercard has agreed to “independent decision-making in advertising” that will fend off “viewpoint-discriminatory advertising decisions” by the company, according to an ADF statement.

Mastercard, a \$500 billion corporation, was elbow deep into the censorship cookie jar through its involvement with the creation of a censorship nonprofit. In 2019, the World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) formed Global Alliance for Responsible Media ([GARM](#)), a nonprofit that aimed to address digital safety but actually censored mainstream conservative and religious views.

Mastercard Chief Marketing and Communications Officer Raja Rajamannar was on the WFA [board](#) at the time, and, according to ADF, Mastercard was “instrumental in the formation” of GARM.

“GARM [pressured](#) Spotify to boot Joe Rogan from its platform and promoted the Global Disinformation Index and NewsGuard, which blacklist mainstream conservative media outlets as ‘misinformation.’ GARM disbanded in 2024 after a probe from the U.S. House Judiciary Committee and after X CEO Elon Musk filed a lawsuit alleging that the group illegally [conspired](#) to pull advertising dollars from his platform,” according to an ADF statement on Mastercard’s policy reversal.

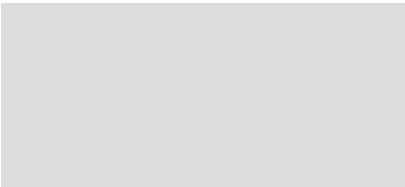
Shareholder Inspire Investing, which describes itself as a “[biblically responsible](#) investing” firm, “filed a proposal calling on the board of directors to account for Mastercard’s discriminatory ad buying through GARM,” the ADF statement said. “Mastercard met with Inspire Investing and Alliance Defending Freedom before agreeing to change its policy in exchange for the shareholder withdrawing his resolution from the ballot. The statement affirms that, ‘Mastercard alone makes decisions on our brand and our marketing activities, independent of any third-party views.’”

A 2024 congressional [investigation](#) by the House Committee on the Judiciary found that “a GARM ad-tech partner assisted the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its Cybersecurity Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) in the creation of tools to aid in the identification of dis- and misinformation.”

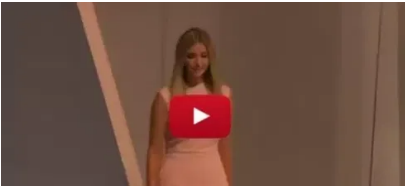
This is all a good definition of the phrase “censorship-industrial complex.” Here, [Mastercard](#) was the “industrial” part, and conservative media outlets like The Federalist were among those being censored.

Mastercard’s policy change means the corporation is solely accountable for its advertising decisions. If it decides to celebrate woke themes or quash conservative values, it won’t be able to blame a third party like GARM for its messaging. The good news for Mastercard is, there are many ways to promote its brand broadly, sensitively, and reach many more potential customers using common ground themes.

“The win at Mastercard is one of 13 policy and behavior changes at major corporations from ADF’s coalition of like-minded shareholder advocates so far this year,” the ADF stated. “Earlier this year, PepsiCo and Johnson & Johnson made similar commitments, cutting ties with third-party censorship cartels like GARM. JPMorgan Chase recently enacted a major policy change to prevent future discriminatory debanking, while the coalition has made substantive progress at Walmart, Comcast, Verizon, and Morgan Stanley.”



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Beth Brelje is an elections correspondent for The Federalist. She is an award-winning investigative journalist with decades of media experience.

ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM	CENSORSHIP	CENSORSHIP INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX	CONSERVATIVE	GARM
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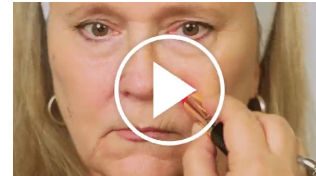
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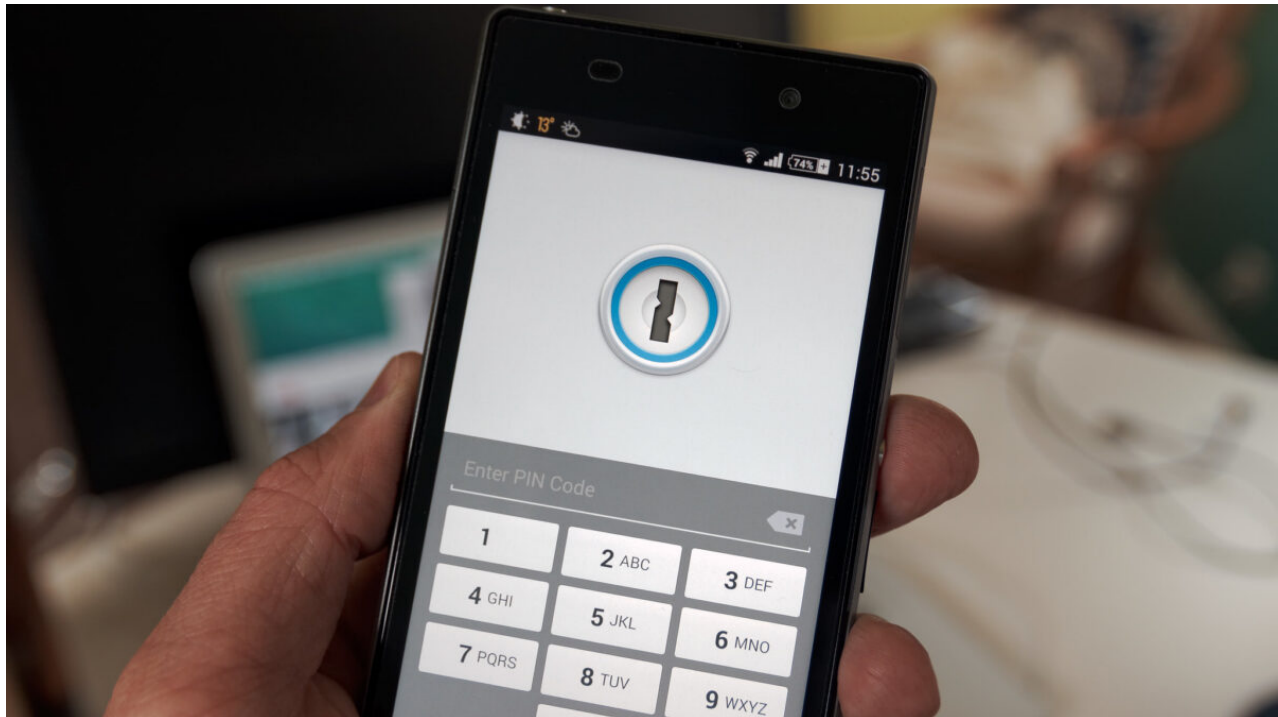
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BETH BRELJE

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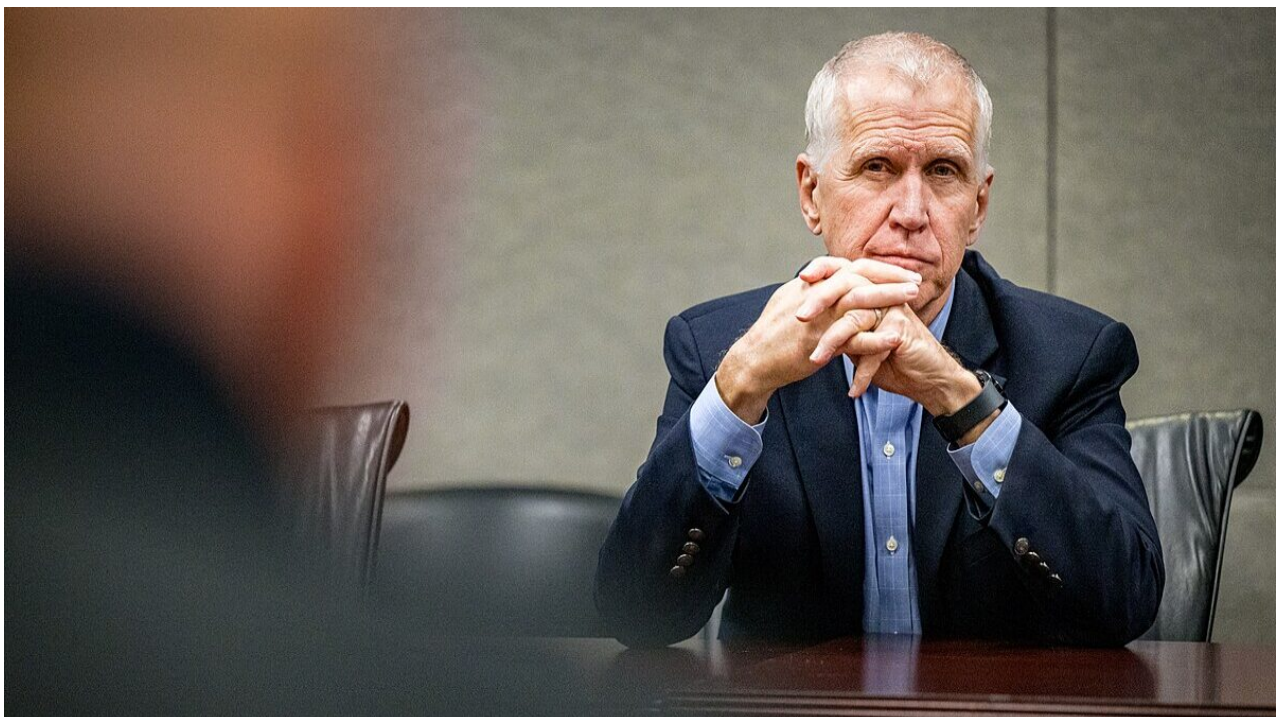
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