

*The following is an excerpt from a lightly edited transcript of the April 9, 2025 Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism hearing, “A Time for Truth: Oversight of Meta’s Foreign Relations and Representations to the United States Congress.” The full transcript is available at <https://www.techpolicy.press/transcript-former-exec-sarah-wynnwilliams-testifies-on-facebooks-courtship-of-china/>*

**Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT):**

Thank you. Thank you. Mr. Chairman. I would be interested in knowing Ms. Williams when Meta first tried to silence you, when they first contacted you, what was said to you? And I assume it was in the nature of a threat and a warning of some kind.

**Sarah Wynn-Williams:**

Yes. Senator. I have had some very, I'm trying to find the right word, aggressive threats from this company. And the last four weeks have been very difficult.

**Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT):**

Apart from the threats in a judicial setting. Have there been others?

**Sarah Wynn-Williams:**

There have been a number of things. Senator? Yes. Yeah.

**Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT):**

Would you prefer to tell us about that in private?

**Sarah Wynn-Williams:**

No, it is. Okay. I can. Sorry, it's hard, but I can talk about it. Yeah. Well, so Meta has said, so even the choice to come to speak to Congress was incredibly difficult. Maybe it's helpful if I read what they told me.

**Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT):**

Please do.

**Sarah Wynn-Williams:**

And they said the purpose of, sorry. They said if the respondent with me, if I were permitted to communicate with legislators, that's you. Such actions would create an exception to non-disparagement that it would eat the rule. In such circumstances, nothing would limit or prevent those legislators or their aids from parroting to the public. Any disparaging statements. And I just want to pause here because a disparaging statement is a true statement, so it's telling you the truth. Respondent is barred from disclosing. So they were very clear that even coming to speak to you about the truth and about the concerns of national security and protecting our children and sharing these truths with you, that would have not only \$50,000 for each truthful statement, actual damages for breach of confidentiality, actual and punitive damages for fraud and other claims.

**Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT):**

So lemme just be clear in effect, they are warning you against what we might say publicly based on your comments to us. Even though they might not hold you or bar you from coming here,

**Sarah Wynn-Williams:**

They have said that as a potential consequence, that is the order they have secured.

**Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT):**

That, in effect, you'd be held responsible for what we might say as a result of your truthful testimony.

**Sarah Wynn-Williams:**

Not just you, senators, something your aid might say. I mean they frame it as something your A might parrot.

**Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT):**

In other words, what these folks in back of us might say as well as what we might say,

**Sarah Wynn-Williams:**

Even though it's factual and true.

**Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT):**

Even though it's factually true in effect. I mean now that you mention it, it creates pressure on us not to tell the truth to the American public is the way I view it. It's in a sense threatening you and thereby putting pressure on us. We could have to worry about harming you as a result.

**Sarah Wynn-Williams:**

Please don't worry about harming me.

**Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT):**

And when did they first contact you? I guess when they became aware of your book or,

**Sarah Wynn-Williams:**

Well, that's right. They put out public statements when they first became aware of the book. But they also effectively tried to, I mean, I dunno, very, I am learning very fast about the system of arbitration, which seems incredibly unjust. But they sought to game that they said that they had notified me of an arbitration. They have my email on file. They have so many ways to contact me. I worked with 'em for a long time. Most of the senior executives have emailed me, but they chose not to notify me through that email address. So I was not a...

**Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT):**

They issued a public statement. Correct. So they first went public and then contacted you?

**Sarah Wynn-Williams:**

Well, they didn't contact me, yes. Send.

**Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT):**

And what did they do to start the arbitration process?

**Sarah Wynn-Williams:**

They started it without me. They secured the order without me.

**Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT):**

Without any representation.

**Sarah Wynn-Williams:**

That's correct, because I was not aware of it. They'd sent it to an email address from 2007.

**Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT):**

And my understanding is that you were regularly communicating with Meta, but they still used a defunct email address to serve the notice of the emergency arbitration. You were provided no notice of the proceeding, the appointment of an emergency arbitrator without your legal team knowing or having opportunity to object. And the initial hearing took place without anybody from your legal team participating.

**Sarah Wynn-Williams:**

Yeah, I didn't know about it, so I couldn't participate in it.

**Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT):**

And once they had an emergency gag order in hand, they knew how to reach you. Correct.

**Sarah Wynn-Williams:**

Senator, I was honestly, I was trying to get my toddler to eat some oatmeal and the door went, the doorbell went, and it's a little embarrassing, but it was just after the book had published. So I thought it might've been someone delivering flowers. No, it was a gag order.

**Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT):**

So Meta's flowers were a gag order, and they knew where you were. They had no trouble reaching with the emergency gag order. They didn't bother letting you know about the arbitration process or anything before they got what they wanted.

**Sarah Wynn-Williams:**

They obviously knew where my home was the entire time.

**Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT):**

Well, Mr. Chairman, I think that this experience is kind of a textbook example of the kind of problems that we hear from our constituents relating to forced arbitration. I happen to be the lead sponsor in the Senate of the Forced Arbitration and Justice Repeal Act, known as the Fair Act, which would end these kinds of abusive clauses that enabled them to do what they did with you, Ms. Wynn-Williams. And just so we're absolutely clear, they're trying to force you to pay them this \$50,000 in liquidated damages for each so-called disparaging comment, true comment, which they regard as unfavorable to them even when you tell the truth about their misconduct, correct?

**Sarah Wynn-Williams:**

That's correct. Senator.