

DOJ Suit Against Google Heralded as Among ‘Most Important Antitrust Cases’ in US History

"Never before has a single private institution concentrated so much power and control over so many corners of our nation's political economy," said one anti-monopoly expert.

By [Jessica Corbett](#)

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Anti-monopoly advocates on Tuesday praised the Biden administration and eight states for launching a federal antitrust lawsuit that could break up Google, which is accused of illegally dominating the digital advertising market.

"Competition in the ad tech space is broken, for reasons that were neither accidental nor inevitable," [states](#) the complaint filed by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), California, Colorado, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Virginia in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia.

"One industry behemoth, Google, has corrupted legitimate competition in the ad tech industry by engaging in a systematic campaign to seize control of the wide swath of high-tech tools used by publishers, advertisers, and brokers, to facilitate digital advertising," the complaint continues.

"Having inserted itself into all aspects of the digital advertising marketplace, Google has used anti-competitive, exclusionary, and unlawful means to eliminate or severely diminish any threat to its dominance over digital advertising technologies," the document adds, urging the court to force the Alphabet-owned company to sell off its ad tech products.

Echoing the complaint, Demand Progress executive director David Segal [pointed out](#) that "Google's monopoly in the advertising technology market functionally forces publishers and advertisers to use its services."

"We're glad to see the Department of Justice demand a breakup of this tech giant, directly taking on its unfair, anti-competitive practices," he said. "This move is critical to protect our

democracy, increase innovation, and strengthen small businesses.”

□NEW: [@JusticeATR](#) is holding [@Google](#) accountable for illegally monopolizing the market for online ads.

We applaud the DOJ for pushing a pro-competition agenda that actually enforces laws on the books and protects the general public from Big Tech.<https://t.co/2syPzCm3wp>

— The Tech Oversight Project (@Tech_Oversight) [January 24, 2023](#)

American Economic Liberties Project director of research Matt Stoller also [welcomed](#) the suit, declaring that “we’re thrilled to see the Department of Justice finally demand a breakup of Google’s advertising monopoly.”

“As the Justice Department’s suit meticulously documents, Google is a buyer, broker, and digital advertising exchange with pervasive conflicts of interest,” Stoller said. “Google regularly abuses this power, manipulating markets, muscling out any form of competition, and inspiring fear across the commercial landscape.”

“The DOJ’s suit, which comes alongside a similar suit from a coalition of state attorneys general and efforts in Congress to bring fairness to digital ad markets, shows clearly that Google’s days of unbridled dominance are numbered,” he asserted.

Bloomberg [noted](#) Tuesday that “state attorneys general have filed three separate suits against Google, alleging it dominates the markets for online search, advertising technology, and apps on the Android mobile platform in violation of antitrust laws.”

This is the DOJ’s first case against the tech giant under President Joe Biden but follows another [filed](#) just months before he took office. In response to the new filing, a Google spokesperson [said](#) that “today’s lawsuit from the DOJ attempts to pick winners and losers in the highly competitive advertising technology sector. It largely duplicates an unfounded lawsuit by the Texas attorney general, much of which was recently dismissed by a federal court. DOJ is doubling down on a flawed argument that would slow innovation, raise advertising fees, and make it harder for thousands of small businesses and publishers to grow.”

JUST IN: AG Merrick Garland announced the Justice Department, along with 8 states, filed a civil antitrust lawsuit against Google.

‘Google has used anticompetitive, exclusionary, & unlawful conduct to eliminate or severely diminish any threat to its [digital ad] dominance.’
<pic.twitter.com/ji2Drydhym>

— NowThis (@nowthisnews) [January 24, 2023](#)

Meanwhile, Open Markets Institute executive director Barry Lynn [argued](#) that “today’s lawsuit by the Department of Justice against Google for the monopolization of advertising will be remembered as one of the most important antitrust cases in American history. No

previous corporation has ever posed such a direct threat to U.S. democracy, or to individual freedom of expression, action, and thought.”

Along with heaping praise on the DOJ’s Antitrust Division, Lynn highlighted the impacts of Google’s dominance:

The breadth and scope of Google’s threat to the American way of life is astounding. Never before has a single private institution concentrated so much power and control over so many corners of our nation’s political economy. But the most dangerous threat of all is Google’s theft of advertising dollars through large-scale and pervasive surveillance that, since before the Revolution, have ensured the independence and economic health of America’s free press. The cost has been enormous. Tens of thousands of journalism jobs destroyed. Thousands of newspapers and other news outlets bankrupted. Every publisher, no matter how big, made fearful of speaking out.

Stacy Mitchell, co-director of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, [stressed](#) that “by picking the pocket of small businesses, small newspapers, and other publishers, Google actively extracts resources from communities that need them most and threatens a free, local press that lies at the heart of our democracy,”

“After decades in which enforcers looked the other way as the tech giants amassed market power, this lawsuit is yet another sign that our antitrust enforcers are again embracing their responsibility to safeguard American liberty and democracy by breaking up monopolies like Google,” she said. “We applaud the Justice Department’s action today.”

U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland, who joined other DOJ leaders for a Tuesday press conference about the case, [pledged](#) that “no matter the industry and no matter the company, the Justice Department will vigorously enforce our antitrust laws to protect consumers, safeguard competition, and ensure economic fairness and opportunity for all.”

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Jessica Corbett is a staff writer for Common Dreams.

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