

## Twitter Won't Give Anonymous User's Information to U.S. Government



*Summary: The U.S. Government has dropped its summons to Twitter, demanding a release of information about an anonymous Donald Trump critic.*

Anyone who uses Twitter knows that it's an imperfect platform. Users are stuck composing thoughts with a 140 character limit, and tweets can be wildly misconstrued due to sarcasm not traveling well online. But an even bigger problem on Twitter is the threat of harassment and spread of misinformation. Because the social media platform does not require identity verification, there is a slew of bots, impersonation accounts, and anonymous trolls just waiting to pick apart your syntax or deny facts until you delete your account out of frustration.

But Twitter is also a powerful broadcasting tool. With over 320 million monthly users from around the world, it is a necessary evil for anyone with a message that needs to be shared quickly and with as many people as possible. Because of Twitter's influence, companies, powerful individuals, and even the U.S. government want to make sure that voices of criticism are delegitimized. But Twitter has shown that time and time again that it is not willing to play ball in the silencing.

On Thursday, Twitter filed a federal lawsuit, seeking to block an order from the U.S. government. According to *Reuters*, the lawsuit was a response to the government demanding the social media giant reveal the identity of an anonymous account that criticizes President Donald Trump's immigration policies.

On Friday, Twitter dropped the lawsuit after the government withdrew its summons.

Nearly half of the country voted for Trump's opponent Hillary Clinton, and her supporters and other Trump detractors have been vocal online. However, the government honed in on the account, @ALT\_uscis, because it was believed to belong to a federal immigration employee. The account's name is an acronym for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and its profile description said its purpose was "immigration resistance." The majority of its content criticizes Trump, the alt-right, and Trump's immigration policies.

Trump has received both praise and criticism for his strict immigration policies. These policies include wanting to build a border wall between the U.S. and Mexico, deporting undocumented people, and signing a ban restricting entry of travelers from Muslim-majority countries.

After receiving the summons this week, Twitter refused to hand over the user's data, citing freedom of speech.

"The rights of free speech afforded Twitter's users and Twitter itself under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution include a right to disseminate such anonymous or pseudonymous political speech," Twitter stated in the lawsuit.

The social media company, who has a history of fighting to protect its users' privacy, was represented by Seth Waxman, a former Justice Department official.

The creator of @ALT\_uscis was represented by Esha Bhandari, a staff attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union who told *Reuters* that the summons was unusual.

"We have seen no reason the government has given for seeking to unmask this speaker's identity," Bhandari said.

According to *Reuters*, the summons was signed by a Florida-based supervisor who works in an office that investigates employee misconduct, and the summons did not appear to be from the White House itself.

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Source: *Reuters*

Photo courtesy of BGR

**What do you think of anonymous accounts on Twitter? Let us know in the comments below.**

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