



## Official Epik Update on Parler

Epik Addresses Questions Regarding Parler Status and Future Hosting Services

**January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

As a follow up to our official statement from January 11<sup>th</sup>, Epik staff and management wanted to first recognize the tremendous outpouring of support and positive encouragements we have received over the past few days. It is a testament to the unwavering strength of our nation, and the great importance of our democracy, to be able to rely upon so many passionate and patriotic perspectives as we navigate this journey together. We are thankful for each and every one of your voices, and the courage displayed in ensuring that they will be heard.

For many individuals online today, it is a world of great uncertainty, as many influencers seemingly want to guide opinions, sentiments and perceptions into two contrasting polarities. It is a shame as we desperately need healing, unity, and reconciliation. It is difficult to achieve this when many of our social media platforms have been reduced to feeding an “us versus them” mentality to compete for market interest and consumer relevance. I believe history will look back unfavorably at the architects of this division, more than those in power would ever want to acknowledge. Overall it is a tragically poor reflection of humanity and our inability to learn from past mistakes.

As many have prior reported, Parler elected to move their domain name to Epik on Monday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, and we had no prior conversations or discussions with them related to this decision. This was after we had published our official statement over the weekend, and we had no anticipation their domain name would arrive at Epik.

Since then, many reporters in their initial coverage appear to be confused over the role of a registrar. For the record, there is generally no involvement of consent for this basic action. Anyone can setup an account. The entire process is automated as per the common practice that nearly all registrars follow. Millions of domains are registered and transferred every month, and generally speaking, the registrar has no oversight or active participation with the names that go in and out every day. Their core function is primarily a utilitarian one, to keep track of what domain names are available, and to provide an interface for access and management.



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With respects to Parler, since Monday, we have had discussions with several of their executive team members about what happened, and how they view the future for their platform and community of more than 15 million members. It is of course a highly unusual move for Amazon Web Services to simply terminate service, especially given their internal knowledge of what social platforms are having to contend with in recent weeks. There has been an unprecedented number of fake accounts being purposefully setup with the intent to publish horrific and violent content. So-called “burner accounts” are set up simply so they can be engaged at a later date to diminish the voices of legitimate users. This manipulative practice on all social networks cannot be ignored. The correlation behind these events may even be measurable by the reprehensible eagerness for the largest technology companies in the world to simply turn off service to millions of active users over a weekend. The idea that 15 million people should suffer immediate service termination due to the actions of a few, should frighten anyone with the capacity for logical discernment of truth and what it means for the future.

Again this is an unprecedented action. One that is made all the more concerning through the knowledge that the miniscule amount of content flagged for review and deletion in no way represented or conveyed the interests and views of the actual vast user base. A comparable standard has never been applied onto other major technology companies, services providers, or the largest of the social media operators. It may very well represent one of the most grotesque abuses of power and privilege in America seen in this generation. It serves the very creation and stimulation of extremist beliefs that Amazon and others have professed to care about. Their direct actions make a majority of Americans more uncertain about their future, more concerned about the roles and controlling interests of our largest monopolies, and it risks stimulating direct anger and frustration over the silencing of voices in such quantity. Sadly, there seems to be zero compassion or recognition of the hardships and the elevated level of fear already held by most due to the events of the last year. If the elitist billionaire class is less impacted by the tribulations, then their recent decision-making certainly reflects it.

While we cannot predict what will happen to Parler, we can confirm that the examples utilized to marginalize and ultimately deplatform their active base of millions of users in no way reflect the values of the owners, investors, engineers, community, or the hundreds of moderators that worked tirelessly to serve the people and user base that they loved. The tremendous growth experienced in a very short time alone opened the window for a number of issues seldom seen to this scale, due to their performance, as well as the hyper-charged environment both politically and from hardships related to COVID-19. Whether Parler was the victim of their own success, or specifically inflicted with a new class of content-based sabotage, what is clear is the absolute importance of maintaining the highest standards for policy enforcement and scalable interaction. The need for online communities to become better stewards for future hope and optimism is universal.



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It is beyond disingenuous though to pretend that the depth of anger and outrage seen online - and across all social media networks - is exclusive to one particular political party or interest group. This manufactured consensus may actually be doing the most harm to those who carry high empathy, ethics, and a legitimate love for our country. The very essence of truth and fair play in America is seemingly becoming corrupted right before our eyes.

With respects to a future relationship between Epik and Parler, it is important to note that our conversations to date have been focused on improvements in policy, rather than specific capabilities for hosting and service provision. As the capacity exists for Parler to purchase servers direct almost anywhere in the world, the most critical elements of any return online should be first focused on the significant responsibility they carry for self-policing, better governance, and more capable enforcement of policy. This means surpassing the already high expectations now placed squarely open their shoulders to use smarter technology and human intervention to operate a better platform.

As an organization originally created for the purpose of bringing people together, to inspire positive and healthy debates, and to introduce new discussions for advancement and improvement, Parler believes they are absolutely up for the challenge. There may be few greater callings than inspiring millions of people daily to hold hope and positive expectation for the future. Epik considers it a privilege to be part of any transformation that can see leading social media platforms become a force for good.

Some of the key elements discussed for recommended implementation included:

- **Updates to Terms of Service and Community Member Obligations**
- **New Guidelines for Internal Regulation and Policy Improvements**
- **Expansions for Moderation Training and Future Candidate Selection**
- **Validation Enhancements for Positive User Authentication**
- **Advancement of Recognition Software and AI Deployment for Early Detection**
- **Strategies to Improve Self-Policing and Enforcement Handling**



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For whatever route that Parler ultimately takes, we believe wholeheartedly that one day they will look back in appreciation and deep gratitude for every obstacle they have encountered and embraced. The opportunity to be the focal point in such a significant and important debate is a rare privilege. With proper reception and attentiveness by their key team members and leaders, it should allow them to benefit from important viewpoints that may have taken other organizations years to receive and implement. In the case of Parler, we hope that the critical lessons will not only be applied, but respected and adopted by others also on a similar journey.

Respectfully yours,

**Robert Davis | SVP Communications**

a: Epik Holdings, Inc. | WA | United States

e: robert.davis@epik.com | w: www.epik.com

**Twitter:** EpikDotCom | **Facebook:** EpikDotCom

**Statement from January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – [www.epik.com/official/parlerstatement](http://www.epik.com/official/parlerstatement)**

For more information on Epik's work in formulating the line for responsible free speech, please see [www.epik.com/blog/fightinghate](http://www.epik.com/blog/fightinghate) for examples of our efforts in combatting both violence and the targeting of others based on skin color, ethnicity, religion, or belief system.