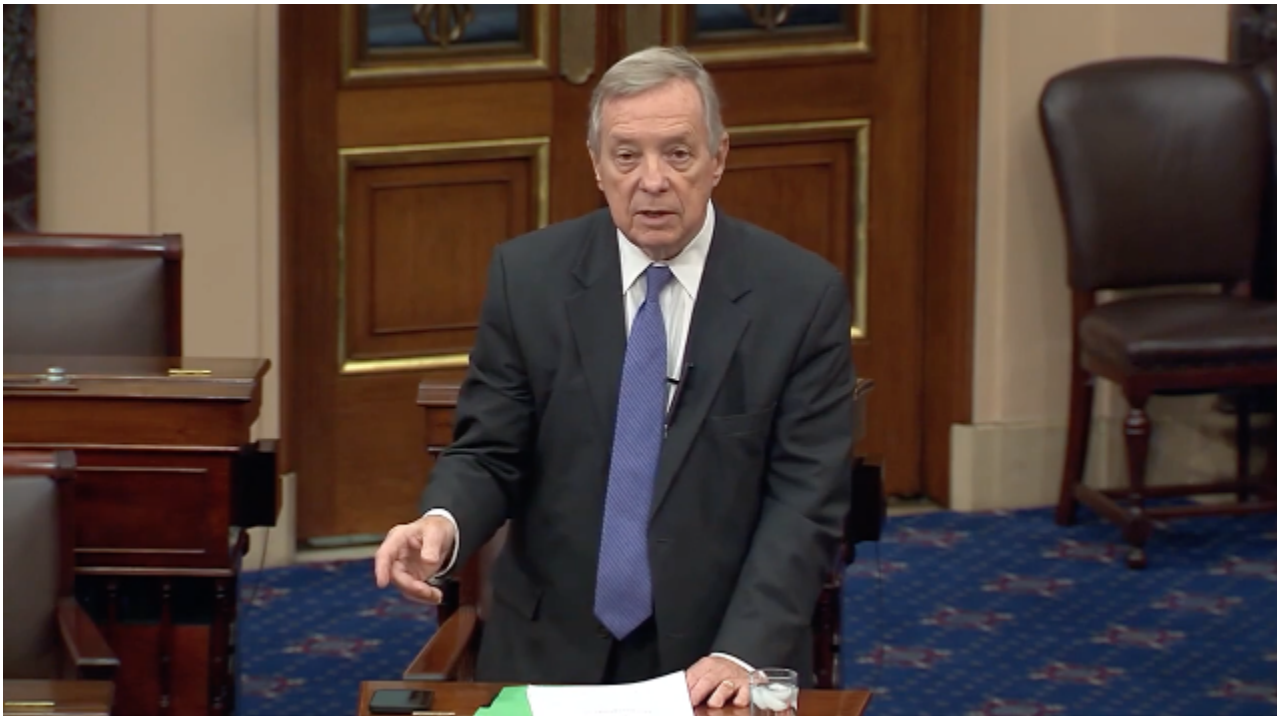


# **Durbin Calls On Online Video Game Industry To Do More To Identify & Remove Extremist Content From Their Platforms**

by Emily Hampsten  
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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, sent letters to publishers of several of the most popular online games—that have reported extremist content issues—requesting information regarding their actions to identify and remove content that broadcasts or promotes terrorism,

violent extremism, or hate crimes, as well as any efforts they have made to address the use of their platforms by those who perpetrate such acts or who seek to recruit or radicalize like-minded individuals.

Last May, after a gunman killed ten and injured three at a Tops Friendly Markets in Buffalo, New York, Durbin sent [letters](#) to the two social media platforms, Twitch and Discord, that the gunman used to plan and then livestream his premediated attack. Through that work and subsequent reports issued by social media watchdogs, it has become clear that extremists and other malicious actors are using features of online video games, and not just traditional social media, as instruments to radicalize and recruit. The Buffalo gunman himself noted on his Discord server that “playing Apocalypse Rising on Roblox gave interests in survival and guns” and that he “probably wouldn’t be as nationalistic if it weren’t for Blood and Iron on roblox .”

“Roblox, like many online games, offers its users the opportunity to do more than play and enjoy a game, but also to create and foster individual and community relationships through the social elements provided. As positive as these attributes can be, for years extremists have exploited the community-building aspects of games to spread propaganda, radicalize and recruit users, and mobilize for terrorist activities,” Durbin wrote David Baszucki, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Roblox Corporation. “Unlike many of its industry peers, Roblox appears to be the only online gaming platform that has implemented a specific policy addressing terrorism and violent extremism. This is a welcome development. However, given the complexity of this kind of moderation, and the continued role of Roblox and online games in facilitating the proliferation of violent extremism, it is crucial that Congress better understand what Roblox is doing to address efforts by violent extremists to use its platform to recruit, organize, and amplify violence and threats of violence.”

Durbin also sent letters to Attorney General Merrick Garland and U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas requesting information regarding their Departments’ efforts to address the growing threat of extremists and other malicious actors exploiting online video games to radicalize and recruit new members.

“This concern transcends a single online game. Surveys conducted by watchdog research groups have found that a significant percentage of players have encountered white-supremacist extremism in online games. For adults, the top six online games where white-supremacist extremism is encountered are Call of Duty (44 percent), Grand Theft Auto (35 percent), Valorant (34 percent), World of Warcraft (31 percent), Fortnite (30 percent), and PlayerUnknown’s Battlegrounds (30 percent),” Durbin wrote in his letter to AG Garland. “Watchdog research groups have also found extremist content on platforms like Steam... Extremists have also reportedly used Minecraft and Roblox to create maps simulating Nazi concentration camps and Uyghur detainment camps.”

In his letters, Durbin noted that it's not just domestic extremists who exploit these features. In 2021, U.S. Customs and Border Protection detained a woman who was trafficking nearly 60 kilograms of methamphetamine. A Mexican drug cartel began the recruitment process by contacting her on *Grand Theft Auto* online before transitioning communications from the game to the Snapchat app. The Mexican government has reported that cartels have also attempted to recruit players through the online components of *Call of Duty* and *Gears of War* in addition to *Grand Theft Auto V*.

Durbin's letter to AG Garland continued, "The online video game industry has been slow to address the threat posed by extremists and other malicious actors on their platforms. Unlike more traditional social media companies—which in recent years have developed public-facing policies addressing extremism, created trust and safety teams, and released transparency reports—online gaming platforms generally have not utilized these tools... Given the complexity of this issue and the lack of concrete data that currently exists, it is crucial that Congress better understand the scope of this problem and what federal resources exist to help address it."

Full text of the letter to Microsoft Gaming is available [here](#).

Full text of the letter to Activision Blizzard is available [here](#).

Full text of the letter to Roblox Corp is available [here](#).

Full text of the letter to Epic Games is available [here](#).

Full text of the letter to Riot Games is available [here](#).

Full text of the letter to Take-Two Interactive is available [here](#).

Full text of the letter to Valve is available [here](#).

Full text of the letter to AG Garland is available [here](#).

Full text of the letter to Secretary Mayorkas is available [here](#).