

# POLITICO

---



The number of ads bought by Russians on Facebook is far less than 1 percent of all election spending. | Leon Neal/AFP/Getty Images

---

## Russian-funded Facebook ads backed Stein, Sanders and Trump

At least one touted Jill Stein, the Green Party candidate, who Clinton says "may well have thrown the election to Trump."

By **JOSH DAWSEY** | 09/26/2017 09:03 PM EDT | Updated 09/26/2017 10:40 PM EDT

Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein was the beneficiary of at least one of the Russian-bought political ads on Facebook that federal government officials suspect were intended to influence the 2016 election.

Other advertisements paid for by shadowy Russian buyers criticized Hillary Clinton and promoted Donald Trump. Some backed Bernie Sanders and his platform even after his presidential campaign had ended, according to a person with knowledge of the ads.

The pro-Stein ad came late in the political campaign and pushed her candidacy for president, this person said.

“Choose peace and vote for Jill Stein,” the ad reads. “Trust me. It’s not a wasted vote. ... The only way to take our country back is to stop voting for the corporations and banks that own us. #GrowaSpineVoteJillStein.”

The ads show a complicated effort that didn’t necessarily hew to promoting Trump and bashing Clinton. Instead, they show a desire to create divisions while sometimes praising Trump, Sanders and Stein. A number of the ads seemed to question Clinton’s authenticity and tout some of the liberal criticisms of her candidacy.

There is no indication Stein, Sanders or Trump was aware of the advertisements, which were described to POLITICO by people with knowledge of them.

Facebook declined to comment on the specifics of the advertisements but noted a previous statement: “The vast majority of ads run by these accounts didn’t specifically reference the U.S. presidential election or voting for a particular candidate. Rather, the ads and accounts appeared to focus on amplifying divisive social and political messages across the ideological spectrum — touching on topics from LGBT matters to race issues to immigration to gun rights.”

U.S. officials are investigating whether about 3,000 ads purchased on Facebook by the Kremlin-linked Internet Research Agency might have been part of a larger Russian government scheme to meddle in the 2016 election.

---

## The most reliable politics newsletter.

☒ Sign up for POLITICO Playbook and get the latest news, every morning — in your inbox.

Your email...

By signing up you agree to receive email newsletters or alerts from POLITICO. You can unsubscribe at any time.

---

The number of ads bought by Russians on the site is far less than 1 percent of all election spending, and it is unclear how many people even saw the advertisements. The social network has estimated the total cost of the ads at \$150,000.

But in her recently published book about her election defeat, “What Happened,” Clinton writes that Stein’s modest vote totals in several swing states “may well have thrown the

election to Trump.”

Clinton pointedly notes that Stein joined Michael Flynn at Russian President Vladimir Putin’s table at a December 2014 dinner in Moscow, and that the leftist candidate “praised [Trump’s] pro-Russia stance,” though she does not accuse Stein of collaborating with the Kremlin. Flynn would go on to become Trump’s national security adviser but lasted less than a month in the job.

Capitol Hill aides are receiving reams of the advertisements this week, and special counsel Robert Mueller’s team has also received the ads and corresponding information.

Some ads described to POLITICO echoed Trump campaign themes, including ones that advocated tough laws on illegal immigration. Others seem to indicate support for Black Lives Matter, an activist group Trump has strongly condemned, or for Muslim women who supported Clinton. But the ad got the name for Black Lives Matter wrong, one of these people said.



#### HEALTH CARE

### Price’s private-jet travels included visits with colleagues, lunch with son

By **DAN DIAMOND** and **RACHANA PRADHAN**

---

Many of the 3,000 Russian-bought advertisements Facebook has identified were riddled with poor grammar and spelling and contained outlandish assertions, according to a person with knowledge of them.

Investigators are likely to probe whether Facebook or any government authority could or should have stopped the ads — and whether the Russian officials were in contact with any Americans.

Earlier this month, Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia, the Democratic vice chairman of the Intelligence Committee, said the 3,000 ads that Facebook has determined to have Russian links may be “the tip of the iceberg” and part of a far larger Kremlin plot to influence the 2016 election through Facebook and other social media platforms.

*Nancy Scola and Ali Watkins contributed to this report.*