

Trump's social network has 30 days to stop breaking the rules of its software license

Truth Social ripped off open-source platform Mastodon

By [Adi Robertson](#) | [@thedextriarchy](#) | Oct 22, 2021, 12:27pm EDT



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(TMTG) has 30 days to comply with the terms of the license before its access is terminated — forcing it to rebuild the platform or face legal action.

TMTG launched a special purpose acquisition company fundraising effort yesterday with [promises to build a sweeping media empire](#). Its only product so far is a social network called Truth Social that appears strongly to be [forked from Mastodon](#). While anyone can freely reuse Mastodon's code (and groups like right-wing social network Gab [have already done so](#)), they still have to comply with the Affero General Public License (or AGPLv3) that governs that code, and its conditions include offering their own source code to all users.

Truth Social doesn't comply with that license and, in fact, refers to its service as "proprietary." Its developers apparently attempted to scrub references that would make the Mastodon connection clear — at one point [listing a "sighting"](#) of the Mastodon logo as a bug — but included direct references to Mastodon in the site's underlying HTML alongside obvious visual similarities.

TRUTH SOCIAL MUST OFFER ITS SOURCE CODE TO THE PRANKSTERS WHO DEFACED IT

TMTG's strategy hasn't sat well with the SFC, an organization that enforces free and open-source software licenses. "The license purposefully treats everyone equally (even people we don't like or agree with), but they must operate under the same rules of the copyleft licenses that apply to everyone else," SFC policy fellow Bradley Kuhn [wrote in a blog post](#). "Today, we saw the Trump Media and Technology Group ignoring those important rules — which were designed for the social good."

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“We will be following this issue very closely and demanding that Trump’s Group give the corresponding source to all who use the site,” Kuhn writes.

Mastodon founder Eugen Rochko also said yesterday that he intended to seek legal counsel about the situation, although he didn’t discuss a specific course of action.

“Compliance with our AGPLv3 license is very important to me as that is the sole basis upon which I and other developers are willing to give away years of work for free,” [he told Talking Points Memo](#).

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