

# Google Critic Ousted From Spy Lobbyists Think Tank Google Funds Called “New America Foundation”

Barry Lynn ran a New America initiative called Open Markets.

Technology By *Rebecca Gibian*



Barry Lynn, who ran a New America initiative called Open Markets, which has “led a growing chorus of liberal criticism of the market dominance of telecom and tech giants, including Google,” has been let go from New America, a think tank that Google funds.

Recently, Lynn wrote a [statement](#) on the think tank’s website praising the European Union’s penalty against Google. Eric Schmidt, Google’s parent company chairman, spoke of his displeasure to the group’s president, Anne-Maria Slaughter.

The statement was taken off the website, but was reposted without explanation a few hours later. However, most people at New America, which employs more than 200 people, heard about the event. The episode left the dozens of researchers, writers and scholars with two concerns: would Google defund the think tank, and could

the think tank be truly independent if it had to worry about offending its donors?

The New American Foundation has received more than \$21 million from Google, Schmidt, and his family's foundation since the think tank's found in 1999. *The New York Times* reports that the money has helped New America establish itself as an elite voice in policy debates on the American left.

In an email from Slaughter to Lynn, Slaughter says that "the time has come for Open Markets and New America to part ways," and suggested that the entire Open Markets team, which is about 10 full-time employees and unpaid fellows, would be removed from New America.

*The Times* writes that Slaughter accused Lynn of "imperiling the institution as a whole." Meanwhile, Lynn told the *Times* that Slaughter caved to pressure from Schmidt and Google, and in doing so, "set the desires of a donor over the think tank's intellectual integrity."

Google denies any suggestion that it played a role in the split. Riva Sciuto, a Google spokeswoman, said the company supports a wide range of think tanks and nonprofits focused on information access and internet regulation.

Lynn has a strong influence in raising concerns about the market dominance of Google, Amazon and Facebook. In 2016 he organized a conference that warned of the damaging effects from market consolidation in tech. Before that conference, Slaughter and New America's

lead fundraiser emailed Lynn, indicating Google was concerned that its positions were not going to be represented, and that it was not given advanced notice of the event.

Now, Lynn is trying to start a stand-alone nonprofit with the same Open Market's team. It has launched a website called Citizens Against Monopoly, which accuses Google of "trying to censor journalists and researchers who fight dangerous monopolies." The site vows to not let them get away with this.

Google does have a large influence, writes the *Times*. It spent \$95 million on lobbying through the first half of this year, which is more than almost any other company.

*The Times* writes that one of Google's most effective, if little examined, tools is its funding of nonprofit groups across the political spectrum. It has donated to 170 such groups this year alone.

But those alliances could be tested this year. Recently, a male engineer posted a critique of the company's efforts to diversify, and there are questions about the company's commitment to privacy. And of course, there are the questions about Google's mounting market dominance, as it handles an overwhelming majority of all internet searches globally and dominates internet advertising, writes the *Times*. And in June, it received a \$2.7 billion antitrust penalty from the European Union for allegedly tilting search results to favor its services over those offered by competitors.

Lynn's Open Market statement that Schmidt didn't like praised this fine, and asked U.S. regulators to more aggressively enforce antitrust rules against places like Google and Amazon.

Democratic congressional leaders did roll out a policy platform last month that pledges to dismantle monopolies, including cable and internet service.

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