

Rep. Jim Banks intentionally misgendered a high-ranking trans official. Twitter locked his account.



By [Jonathan Edwards](#)

October 25, 2021 at 7:30 a.m. EDT



A Republican congressman was defiant after Twitter locked his account for intentionally misgendering a high-ranking transgender official — an act the social media platform deemed “hateful.”

Rep. Jim Banks of Indiana accused the tech company of censoring him after he referred to Rachel Levine, the country’s first openly transgender four-star officer, as a man. Banks told his followers that if social media platforms could “cancel” him, the companies would soon silence them, too. He promised not to cave and vowed to hold Big Tech accountable.

Last week, Banks sent a pair of tweets reacting to news of Levine being sworn in as a four-star admiral with the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps. Banks responded by posting that the honor had been “taken by a man.”

He elaborated with a follow-up tweet: “Calling someone that was born and lived as a man for 54 years the first ‘female’ four-star officer is an insult to every little girl who dreams of breaking glass ceilings one day.”

A Twitter spokeswoman told The Washington Post that one of Banks’s tweets violated the company’s hateful conduct policy and that he must delete it before regaining access to his account. The tweet is no longer published on Banks’s account, but it’s unclear whether he or Twitter removed it. The last tweet on his official account was published Friday. A spokesman for Banks did not respond to a request for comment from The Post.

Banks has pivoted to his personal Twitter account, where he defended what he wrote and blasted the tech company.

“My tweet was a statement of fact. Big Tech doesn’t have to agree with me, but they shouldn’t be able to cancel me. If they silence me, they will silence you. We can’t allow Big Tech to prevent us from telling the truth,” he wrote in a statement.

In a separate tweet, he said he wasn’t going to give in to Twitter’s demand to take down his post. “I won’t back down,” he wrote. “I’ll be posting on my personal account for the time being.”

Banks joins a growing chorus of Republican politicians who’ve railed against social media companies that have blocked comments labeled as hateful or misinformation. Former president Donald Trump has been banned from Twitter. His Facebook account was also suspended for two years.

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.), whose Twitter account has been suspended several times, also ran afoul of the company’s hateful conduct rules last week by tweeting that Levine “isn’t the first female anything.” The social



Twitter updated its policy on misgendering in 2018. It now prohibits “non-consensual slurs, epithets, racist and sexist tropes, or other content that degrades someone,” which includes “targeted misgendering or deadnaming of transgender individuals.” Those terms refer to misidentifying someone’s gender.

Levine did not respond to Banks’s comments on Twitter. She has, as The Post [reported last week](#), been repeatedly targeted by conservative groups and politicians as the first openly transgender federal official to be confirmed by the Senate. The assistant secretary for health was sworn in Tuesday as an admiral in the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, one of the country’s eight uniformed services — which also include military branches like the Army, Navy and Air Force. Its roughly 6,000-person force responds to health crises, which have included dispensing [coronavirus](#) vaccines and administering care after hurricanes.

She dismissed the uproar over her leadership assignments. “I am not worried,” Levine [told The Post](#). “I’m such a strong proponent of diversity, equity and inclusion ... and we have a president that is such a strong advocate of diversity, equity and inclusion as well.”

Banks, a Navy Reserve officer, was elected to Congress the same night Trump won the 2016 election. [He’s said he was “skeptical”](#) at first of the 45th president but “he won me over more and more every single day.” Banks was one of nearly 150 Republican members of Congress who objected to certifying the 2020 election results and has met with Trump multiple times since he left the White House.

“Jim understands there’s no future for the Republican Party without Trump supporters,” former congressman Luke Messer (R-Ind.) [told the Associated Press](#) earlier this year.

