

The Star-Ledger

N.J. accuses Google of having an illegal monopoly

By Blake Nelson

NJ Advance Media for NJ.com and The Star-Ledger

Published Dec. 19, 2020

New Jersey has joined a lawsuit to accuse Google of holding an illegal monopoly over internet searches.

Google pays billions to limit competition and stifle the flow of information and a court should consider breaking part of the company up, according to the complaint filed by dozens of states.

“As the gateway to the internet, Google has systematically degraded the ability of other companies to access consumers,” the states wrote Thursday.

The lawsuit “sends the message that no company is too powerful to avoid real accountability,” state Attorney General Gurbir Grewal added in a statement.

In a blog post, Google’s economic policy director defended the company and said changing Google’s search engine would harm consumers.

“We know that scrutiny of big companies is important and we’re prepared to answer questions and work through the issues,” Adam Cohen wrote. “But this lawsuit seeks to redesign Search in ways that would deprive Americans of helpful information and hurt businesses’ ability to connect directly with customers.”

The lawsuit, which was partially redacted, also said Google pays Apple up to \$12 billion every year to keep Google as its default search engine, limits other search options on Androids and artificially steers advertising dollars away from competitors.

The complaint comes a week after New Jersey asked a court to break up Facebook, and reflects a growing bipartisan consensus that some technology companies are too powerful.

New Jersey’s newest lawsuits not only partner with conservative states but are bolstered by the federal government, including a U.S. Department of Justice lawsuit filed against Google in October.

This cooperation comes after New Jersey spent years working with other Democratic attorneys general to challenge federal policies.

Thursday’s lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia by 35 states, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico and Guam. New Jersey’s role is overseen by Deputy Attorney General Robert Holup, who is also overseeing the Facebook case.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.