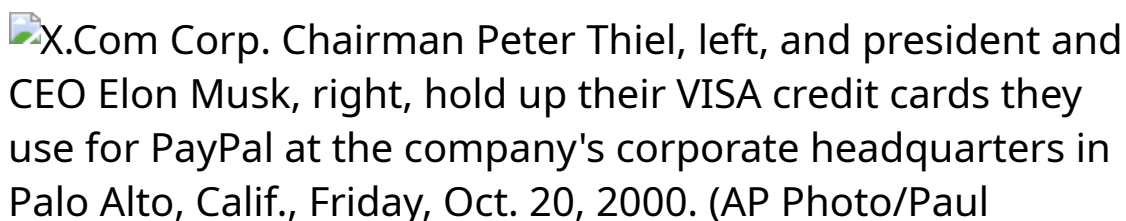


**NEW SILICON VALLEY LEADERS
SAY "GOOGLE IS A MENACE TO
SOCIETY"**

Is billionaire VC Peter Thiel trying to break up Google?

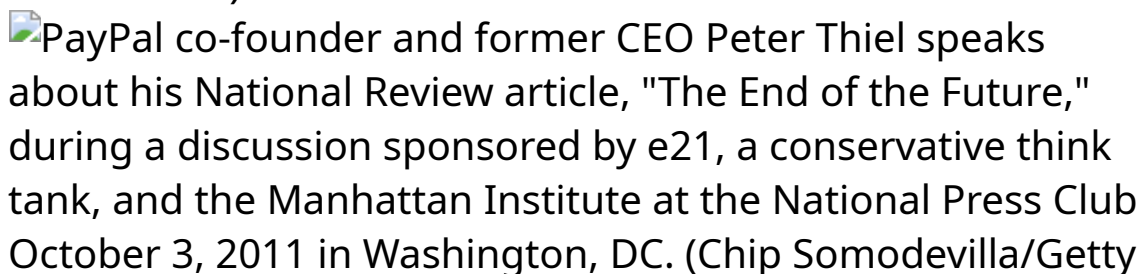
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 X.Com Corp. Chairman Peter Thiel, left, and president and CEO Elon Musk, right, hold up their VISA credit cards they use for PayPal at the company's corporate headquarters in Palo Alto, Calif., Friday, Oct. 20, 2000. (AP Photo/Paul


- Sakuma)


 (L-R) Founders Fund's Max Levchin, Founders Fund Managing Partner Peter Thiel and TechCrunch Co-Editor Erick Schonfeld speak onstage at Day 1 of TechCrunch Disrupt SF 2011 held at the San Francisco Design Center Concourse on September 12, 2011 in San Francisco, California. (Photo by Araya Diaz/Getty Images for

- TechCrunch)

 PayPal co-founder and former CEO Peter Thiel speaks about his National Review article, "The End of the Future," during a discussion sponsored by e21, a conservative think tank, and the Manhattan Institute at the National Press Club October 3, 2011 in Washington, DC. (Chip Somodevilla/Getty

- Images)

-  Peter Thiel winner for VC of the Year at the 6th Annual Crunchies Awards at Davies Symphony Hall on January 31, 2013 in San Francisco, California. (Steve Jennings/Getty Images for The Crunchies)
-  Founders Fund Managing Partner Peter Theil (L) and TechCrunch Co-Editor and Moderator Alexia Tsotsis speak onstage at TechCrunch Disrupt at Pier 48 on September 8, 2014 in San Francisco, California. (Steve Jennings/Getty Images for TechCrunch)
-  Venture Capitalist Peter Thiel in his offices at the Presidio in San Francisco, Calif., on Tuesday, Sept. 30, 2014. Thiel, who cofounded PayPal with Max Levchin and Elon Musk recently released a book called Zero to One, a how-to for building startups. (John Green/ Bay Area News Group)
-  Entrepreneur Peter Thiel gives remarks at the National Press Club on October 31, 2016 in Washington, DC. Thiel discussed his support for Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump. (Photo by Alex Wong/Getty Images)
-  Apple CEO Tim Cook, right, and PayPal founder Peter Thiel, center, listen as President-elect Donald Trump speaks during a meeting with technology industry leaders at Trump Tower in New York, Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2016. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)
-  Peter Thiel, co-founder of PayPal, stands on stage prior to the start of the second day of the Republican National Convention on July 19, 2016 at the Quicken Loans Arena in Cleveland, Ohio. (Alex Wong/Getty Images)

-  Entrepreneur Peter Thiel (R) participates in a discussion with National Press Club president and Washington correspondent for the Salt Lake Tribune Thomas Burr (L) at the National Press Club on October 31, 2016 in Washington, DC. (Alex Wong/Getty Images)
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of

By [Ethan Baron](#) | ebaron@bayareanewsgroup.com | Bay Area News Group

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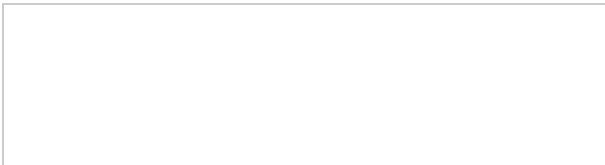
So far, high-profile Silicon Valley venture capitalist and PayPal co-founder Peter Thiel isn't saying publicly why he gave hundreds of thousands of dollars to the campaign of a state attorney general who's just launched an antitrust probe of Google.

But it's not the first time Thiel has handed cash to an AG who went after Google over monopoly concerns.

Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley announced Nov. 13 that his office was investigating Google to see if the Mountain View tech giant had violated the state's antitrust and consumer-protection laws. The Missouri attorney general said he had issued an investigative subpoena to Google. He's looking at the firm's handling of users' personal data, along with claims that it misappropriated content from rivals and pushed down competitors' websites in search results.

Google did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the Missouri action and Thiel's support of Hawley.

The company has been at the center of controversy over whether some of America's most successful tech companies are monopolies and should be regulated or broken up. A New York Times op-ed in April asked, "Is It Time to Break Up Google?"



"We are going to have to decide fairly soon whether Google, Facebook and Amazon are the kinds of natural monopolies that need to be regulated," wrote Jonathan Taplin, former director of USC's Annenberg School of Innovation and author of "Move Fast and Break Things: How Google, Facebook, and Amazon Have Cornered Culture and Undermined Democracy."

In June, the European Union slapped Google with a \$2.7 billion antitrust fine for favoring some of its services over competitors'. Google has said it was considering an appeal.

In Missouri, Thiel put his money behind Hawley in 2015, with \$100,000 contributed during Hawley's campaign for the state attorney general's seat, then added two more \$100,000 donations to the campaign in 2016, according to the National Institute on Money in State Politics. Hawley was sworn in on Jan. 9.

Hawley is not the only state attorney general to have probed Google over antitrust concerns. Former Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott began investigating Google in 2010. In 2013, Thiel

donated \$100,000 to Abbott, according to the National Institute on Money in State Politics.

This news organization has asked the Texas Attorney General's office for information about the status of the Google investigation — this article will be updated if an answer is provided.

In response to Abbott's probe, Google in 2010 said in a blog post that it was sometimes asked about the fairness of its search engine.

"Why do some websites get higher rankings than others?" the post said.

"The important thing to remember is that we built Google to provide the most useful, relevant search results and ads for users. In other words, our focus is on users, not websites. Given that not every website can be at the top of the results, or even appear on the first page of our results, it's unsurprising that some less relevant, lower quality websites will be unhappy with their ranking."

Thiel, a billionaire libertarian, previously used his ample financial resources to target a different company: media firm Gawker. Thiel funded a lawsuit by entertainer Hulk Hogan over a sex tape published on Gawker.com, which had earlier publicly outed Thiel as gay. The lawsuit brought about the website's demise.

Thiel did not immediately respond to a request for comment.