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positive and negative feedback from customers, Barrett said. So far, he said, none of his employees have quit over it.

Oct. 26, 2020



Silicon Valley companies are loudly divided over whether politics belongs in the workplace. On Thursday, one of the largest providers of expense account software sent a plea to all of its customers urging them to vote for Joe Biden, injecting politics into 100,000 businesses that use [Expensify Inc.](#)'s tools.

[Link to full letter from Expensify CEO:

<https://community.expensify.com/discussion/7632/protect-democracy-vote-for-biden>]

The plan incited strong debate within the San Francisco-based company, and some

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“We needed to stand true for what we believe in and hope that most people agree with us,” Barrett said in an interview. “It’s not like we did this with a lot of enthusiasm. We did this out of a perceived necessity.”

In the email to customers, Barrett wrote, “Anything less than a vote for Biden is a vote against democracy.” If President Donald Trump were reelected, Barrett wrote, it would “damage our democracy to such an extent, I’m obligated on behalf of shareholders to take any action I can to avoid it.” Barrett suggested a Trump victory would stoke civil unrest. “Not many expense reports get filed during a civil war.” Technology news website Protocol [earlier reported](#) on the email.

Tech workers have made political activism a common part of office life in Silicon Valley over the last few years. But in recent weeks, a counter-movement has emerged from startup executives led by Brian Armstrong, the CEO of [Coinbase Inc.](#), which operates an online exchange for Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies. Armstrong said last month that Coinbase employees would be [barred from advocating](#) for any causes or candidates and offered severance packages to those who refused. About [60 workers took the buyout](#).

Armstrong’s stance drew support from some in the tech world, as well as sharp rebukes from the likes of Jack Dorsey and Dick Costolo, the current and former CEOs of [Twitter Inc.](#) The move by Coinbase, according to Barrett, was “just very cowardly.”

“All evil needs is for good people to stand aside,” Barrett said. “Not standing for anything means you’re standing for the status quo.” His actions may strengthen a widely held view among many Republicans of an anti-conservative bias within tech companies.

Barrett, a Michigan native, started Expensify in 2008. The company competes with

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employees, some challenged assertions in his draft and offered their own fact checks in the company's Slack chatroom. Workers also raised concerns about the repercussions for the business. Barrett recalled the discussion going like this: "We have 100,000 customers. How many of those are just going to freak out about this? How many of our users are going to be upset?"

In the first few hours after the email went out, the company received a mix of positive and negative feedback from customers, Barrett said. So far, he said, none of his employees have quit over it.

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