

ARE SOCIAL MEDIA COMPANIES CENSORING FREE SPEECH?



TECH TIPS

By Joe Awe, President, TechBldrs, Inc.

If you've watched the news recently, you might have heard of Twitter blocking Trump's tweets, Facebook banning Stop the Steal or Google banning political ads.

Are mega-billion-dollar companies censoring free speech? Especially, ones with a conservative narrative? It sure seems that way. But there's always a back story.

Section 230

Back in 1996, a law was passed called the *Communication Decency Act*, and in it was 26 words called *Section 230*. It stated, "No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider."

This innocuous statement was intended to allow free speech from humans without censorship from the yet-to-be-born social media tech giants. It provided a shield for the "interactive computer services" from being sued on the grounds of what user would say.

Jump forward to 2020, and every social media company hides behind *Section 230* when someone points out that their users are spreading false information. In a study by MIT Sloan School that wanted to find out how falsehoods (AKA lies) spread on Twitter, they found that humans are 70 Percent more likely to retweet falsehoods than the truth. Yikes! This means conspiracy theories, flat earth theories, political lies, random misinformation spin out of control.

The Tipping Point

The tipping point happened this year, on May 24th, when our head Twitter in Chief, was fact-checked by Twitter as "Misleading." This upset Trump so much, that on May 28th, Trump signed an "Executive Order on Preventing Online Censorship" to target *Section 230* that restrict the liability protections for social media companies. The Executive Order states: "Twitter seems never to have placed such a label on another politician's tweet. As recently as last week, Representative Adam Schiff was continuing to mislead his followers..." In it, he instructs his administration to petition the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requesting for rulemaking changes to *Section 230*.

This, plus the mounting pressures for better self-regulation, caused the social media companies to start the Fact-Checking war. Unfortunately, most of the fact-checking are against Trump supporters, QAnon and conspiracy fallacies that keep surfacing on social media.

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For example, on July 26th and 27th, two of Trump's retweets are deleted because of false misleading information. Google and Facebook extended bans on all political ads from their platform.

On October 14, the *New York Post's* Twitter account was blocked for its Hunter Biden expose.

On October 10th, the FCC chairman, Aijit Pai, a Trump appointee, stated his intent to change to interpretation *Section 230*. And the war rages on.

So, what's going on here? Are social media companies just blocking conservative posts, video and tweets?

Private Business, and not a government

Because Youtube (Google), Instagram (FaceBook), Facebook, and Twitter are private businesses, the courts have repeatedly ruled that their platforms operate outside the reach of the First Amendment's censorship rules. Why? The First Amendment is very specific. It protects all of us as Americans from the government limiting our speech, and not from private companies.

So why is it important?

What happens when more than 65 percent of adult American say they get their "news" from social media? You know, the private companies that are protected from lawsuits (*Section 230*) and can block anyone they want. Are you ever seeing the whole picture?

If you really want to get the unbiased news, why not use an American non-profit news agency that been around since 1846 — *The Associated Press*. Try the AP News app on iOS and Android phones.

Finally, if you think social media companies are censoring conservatives, they're not. They robotically apply a set of rules to block thousands of posts that violate their policies.

Remember, they are not here to serve humanity. They're here to maximize profit, and you're getting as much protection as you've paid for. Zero.

For additional information, please call 610.601.8017 or email: Info@TechBldrs.com, and remember to check out our blog at www.techbldrs.com/blog/