

Fake News; Real Assault

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I don't defend the way Twitter, Facebook, and others target users for expressing views that these firms dislike. I do defend the individual rights of all persons, including owners of companies. Our freedom to act includes the freedom to act in ways others consider to be wrong — if we do so while respecting the (actual) rights of others.

But something is extra-disturbing about the way Facebook, Google, Apple, Spotify, etc. (though not Twitter) ejected Alex Jones from their platforms. The firms apparently

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obeyed journalists and politicians demanding InfoWar's ouster for purveying “hate speech.”

And now: “These companies must do more than take down one website,” intones incumbent U.S. Senator Chris Murphy.*

Such statements aren't laws. But every company must worry about the arbitrary government power that incumbents like

Potential Policy Proposals for Regulation of Social Media and Technology Firms

Social media and wider digital communications technologies have changed our world in innumerable ways. They have transformed the way we do everything from shopping for groceries to growing our small businesses and have radically lowered the cost of, and barriers to, global communication. The American companies behind these products and services — Facebook, Google, Twitter, Amazon, and Apple, among others — have been some of the most successful and innovative in the world. As such, each of them deserves enormous recognition for the technological transformation they have engendered around the world. As their collective influence has grown, however, these tech giants now also deserve increased scrutiny.

Murphy can deploy. And fellow U.S. Senator Mark Warner's leaked paper on the dangers of technology-abetted fake news tells us we're in for a more direct assault on free speech.

“The size and reach of these platforms demand that we ensure proper oversight, transparency and effective management of technologies that in large measure undergird our social lives . . . and our politics,” says the plan. The goal is to “ensure that this ecosystem no longer exists as the ‘Wild West,’” i.e., unfettered by government.

So . . . the idea is to rescind that wild First Amendment?

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But there is no crying need for this. Let's stick with “Congress shall make no law . . .”

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

* These companies did not take down a website, by the way. Alex Jones's InfoWars.com appears to be going gangbusters. Those companies ousted InfoWars from their Web services. This is a distinction with a difference.