## 117TH CONGRESS 2D SESSION

## H. R. 7613

To repeal section 230 of the Communications Act of 1934 and ensure reasonable, non-discriminatory access to online communications platforms.

## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 28, 2022

Mrs. Greene of Georgia introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

## A BILL

To repeal section 230 of the Communications Act of 1934 and ensure reasonable, non-discriminatory access to online communications platforms.

- 1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
- 2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
- 3 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.
- This Act may be cited as the "21st Century Founda-
- 5 tion for the Right to Express and Engage in Speech Act"
- 6 or the "21st Century FREE Speech Act".

1	SEC. 2. REASONABLE, NON-DISCRIMINATORY ACCESS TO
2	ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS PLATFORMS
3	BLOCKING AND SCREENING OF OFFENSIVE
4	MATERIAL.
5	(a) In General.—Part I of title II of the Commu-
6	nications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 201 et seq.) is amend-
7	ed—
8	(1) by striking section 230; and
9	(2) by adding at the end the following:
10	"SEC. 232. REASONABLE, NON-DISCRIMINATORY ACCESS TO
11	ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS PLATFORMS
12	BLOCKING AND SCREENING OF OFFENSIVE
13	MATERIAL.
14	"(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:
15	"(1) The rapidly developing array of internet
16	and other interactive computer services available to
17	individual Americans represent an extraordinary ad-
18	vance in the availability of educational and informa-
19	tional resources to our citizens.
20	"(2) These services often offer users a great de-
21	gree of control over the information that they re-
22	ceive, as well as the potential for even greater con-
23	trol in the future as technology continues to develop.
24	"(3) The internet and other interactive com-
25	puter services offer a forum for a true diversity of
26	political discourse and viewpoints, unique opportuni-

- ties for cultural development, and myriad avenues for intellectual activity, and regulation of the internet must be tailored to supporting those activities.
  - "(4) The internet and other interactive computer services have flourished, to the benefit of all Americans, with a minimum of government regulation, and regulation should be limited to what is necessary to preserve the societal benefits provided by the internet.
    - "(5) Increasingly Americans rely on internet platforms and websites for a variety of political, educational, cultural, and entertainment services and for communication with one another.
  - "(b) Policy.—It is the policy of the United States—
    - "(1) to promote the continued development of the internet and other interactive computer services and other interactive media;
    - "(2) to preserve a vibrant and competitive free market for the internet and other interactive computer services;
    - "(3) to encourage the development of technologies which maximize user control over what information is received by individuals, families, and schools who use the internet and other interactive

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1	computer services, rather than control and censor-
2	ship driven by interactive computer services;
3	"(4) to facilitate the development and utiliza-
4	tion of blocking and filtering technologies that em-
5	power parents to restrict their children's access to
6	objectionable or inappropriate online material;
7	"(5)(A) to ensure that the internet serves as an
8	open forum for—
9	"(i) a true diversity of discourse and view-
10	points, including political discourse and view-
11	points;
12	"(ii) unique opportunities for cultural de-
13	velopment; and
14	"(iii) myriad avenues for intellectual activ-
15	ity; and
16	"(B) given that the internet is the dominant
17	platform for communication and public debate today,
18	to ensure that major internet communications plat-
19	forms, which function as common carriers in terms
20	of their size, usage, and necessity, are available to
21	all users on reasonable and non-discriminatory terms
22	free from public or private censorship of religious
23	and political speech;

1	"(6) to promote consumer protection and trans-
2	parency regarding information and content manage-
3	ment practices by major internet platforms to—
4	"(A) ensure that consumers understand—
5	"(i) the products they are using; and
6	"(ii) what information is being pre-
7	sented to them and why; and
8	"(B) prevent deceptive or undetectable ac-
9	tions that filter the information presented to
10	consumers; and
11	"(7) to ensure vigorous enforcement of Federal
12	criminal laws to deter and punish trafficking in on-
13	line obscenity, stalking, and harassment.
14	"(c) Reasonable and Nondiscriminatory Ac-
15	CESS TO COMMON CARRIER TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES.—
16	"(1) IN GENERAL.—A common carrier tech-
17	nology company, with respect to the interactive com-
18	puter service provided by the company—
19	"(A) shall furnish the interactive computer
20	service to all persons upon reasonable request;
21	"(B) may not unjustly or unreasonably dis-
22	criminate in charges, practices, classifications,
23	regulations, facilities, treatment, or services for
24	or in connection with the furnishing of the

1	interactive computer service, directly or indi-
2	rectly, by any means or device;
3	"(C) may not make or give any undue or
4	unreasonable preference or advantage to any
5	particular person, class of persons, political or
6	religious group or affiliation, or locality; and
7	"(D) may not subject any particular per-
8	son, class of persons, political or religious group
9	or affiliation, or locality to any undue or unrea-
10	sonable prejudice or disadvantage.
11	"(2) Applicability to broadband.—Para-
12	graph (1) shall not apply with respect to the provi-
13	sion of broadband internet access service.
14	"(d) Consumer Protection and Transparency
15	REGARDING COMMON CARRIER TECHNOLOGY COMPA-
16	NIES.—
17	"(1) IN GENERAL.—A common carrier tech-
18	nology company shall disclose, through a publicly
19	available, easily accessible website, accurate material
20	regarding the content management, moderation, pro-
21	motion, account termination and suspension, and
22	curation mechanisms and practices of the company
23	sufficient to enable—

1	"(A) consumers to make informed choices
2	regarding use of the interactive computer serv-
3	ice provided by the company; and
4	"(B) persons to develop, market, and
5	maintain consumer-driven content management
6	mechanisms with respect to the interactive com-
7	puter service provided by the company.
8	"(2) Best practices.—The Commission, after
9	soliciting comments from the public, shall publish
10	best practices for common carrier technology compa-
11	nies to disclose content management, moderation,
12	promotion, account termination and suspension, and
13	curation mechanisms and practices in accordance
14	with paragraph (1).
15	"(3) Applicability to broadband.—Para-
16	graph (1) shall not apply with respect to the provi-
17	sion of broadband internet access service.
18	"(e) Protection for 'Good Samaritan' Block-
19	ING AND SCREENING OF OFFENSIVE MATERIAL.—
20	"(1) Treatment of publisher or speak-
21	ER.—
22	"(A) In general.—No provider or user of
23	an interactive computer service shall be treated
24	as the publisher or speaker of any material pro-
25	vided by another information content provider.

1	"(B) Exception.—Subparagraph (A)
2	shall not apply to any affirmative act by a pro-
3	vider or user of an interactive computer service
4	with respect to material posted on the inter-
5	active computer service, whether the act is car-
6	ried out manually or through use of an algo-
7	rithm or other automated or semi-automated
8	process, including—
9	"(i) providing its own material;
10	"(ii) commenting or editorializing on,
11	promoting, recommending, or increasing or
12	decreasing the dissemination or visibility to
13	users of its own material or material pro-
14	vided by another information content pro-
15	vider;
16	"(iii) restricting access to or avail-
17	ability of material provided by another in-
18	formation content provider; or
19	"(iv) barring or limiting any informa-
20	tion content provider from using the inter-
21	active computer service.
22	"(2) CIVIL LIABILITY.—
23	"(A) IN GENERAL.—No provider or user of
24	an interactive computer service shall be held lia-

1	ble, under subsection (c) or otherwise, on ac-
2	count of—
3	"(i) any action voluntarily taken in
4	good faith to restrict access to or avail-
5	ability of material that the provider or user
6	considers to be obscene, lewd, lascivious,
7	filthy, excessively violent, harassing, pro-
8	moting self-harm, or unlawful, whether or
9	not such material is constitutionally pro-
10	tected; or
11	"(ii) any action taken to enable or
12	make available to information content pro-
13	viders or others the technical means to re-
14	strict access to material described in clause
15	(i).
16	"(B) Definitions.—For purposes of sub-
17	paragraph (A)—
18	"(i) the term 'excessively violent', with
19	respect to material, means material that—
20	"(I) is likely to be deemed violent
21	and for mature audiences according to
22	the V-chip regulations and TV Paren-
23	tal Guidelines of the Commission pro-
24	mulgated under sections 303(x) and
25	330(e)(4); or

1	"(II) constitutes or intends to
2	advocate domestic terrorism or inter-
3	national terrorism, as defined in sec-
4	tion 2331 of title 18, United States
5	Code;
6	"(ii) the term 'harassing' means mate-
7	rial that—
8	"(I) is—
9	"(aa) provided by an infor-
10	mation content provider with the
11	intent to abuse, threaten, or har-
12	ass any specific person; and
13	"(bb) lacking in any serious
14	literary, artistic, political, or sci-
15	entific value;
16	"(II) violates the CAN-SPAM
17	Act of 2003 (15 U.S.C. 7701 et seq.);
18	or
19	"(III) is malicious computer code
20	intended (whether or not by the im-
21	mediate disseminator) to damage or
22	interfere with the operation of a com-
23	puter;
24	"(iii) the term 'in good faith', with re-
25	spect to restricting access to or availability

1	of specific material, means the provider or
2	user—
3	"(I) restricts access to or avail-
4	ability of material consistent with
5	publicly available online terms of serv-
6	ice or use that—
7	"(aa) state plainly and with
8	particularity the criteria that the
9	provider or user of the interactive
10	computer service employs in its
11	content moderation practices, in-
12	cluding by any partially or fully
13	automated processes; and
14	"(bb) are in effect on the
15	date on which the material is
16	first posted;
17	"(II) has an objectively reason-
18	able belief that the material falls with-
19	in one of the categories listed in sub-
20	paragraph (A)(i);
21	"(III)(aa) does not restrict access
22	to or availability of material on decep-
23	tive or pretextual grounds; and
24	"(bb) does not apply its terms of
25	service or use to restrict access to or

1	availability of material that is simi-
2	larly situated to material that the pro-
3	vider or user of the interactive com-
4	puter service intentionally declines to
5	restrict; and
6	"(IV) supplies the information
7	content provider of the material with
8	timely notice describing with particu-
9	larity the reasonable factual basis for
10	the restriction of access and a mean-
11	ingful opportunity to respond, unless
12	the provider or user of the interactive
13	computer service has an objectively
14	reasonable belief that—
15	"(aa) the material is related
16	to terrorism or criminal activity;
17	or
18	"(bb) such notice would risk
19	imminent physical harm to oth-
20	ers; and
21	"(iv) the terms 'obscene', 'lewd', 'las-
22	civious', and 'filthy', with respect to mate-
23	rial, mean material that—
24	"(I) taken as a whole—

1	"(aa) appeals to the prurient
2	interest in sex or portrays sexual
3	conduct in a patently offensive
4	way; and
5	"(bb) does not have serious
6	literary, artistic, political, or sci-
7	entific value;
8	"(II) depicts or describes sexual
9	or excretory organs or activities in
10	terms patently offensive to the aver-
11	age person, applying contemporary
12	community standards; or
13	"(III) signifies the form of immo-
14	rality which has relation to sexual im-
15	purity, taking into account the stand-
16	ards at common law in prosecutions
17	for obscene libel.
18	"(C) Best practices.—The Commission,
19	after soliciting comments from the public, shall
20	publish best practices for making publicly avail-
21	able online terms of service or use that state
22	plainly and with particularity the criteria that
23	the provider or user of an interactive computer
24	service employs in its content moderation prac-
25	tices, including by any partially or fully auto-

1	mated processes, in accordance with subpara-
2	graph (B)(iii)(I).
3	"(f) Violations.—
4	"(1) Private right of action.—
5	"(A) IN GENERAL.—A person aggrieved by
6	a violation of subsection (c) or (d) may bring a
7	civil action against the provider or user of an
8	interactive computer service that committed the
9	violation for any relief permitted under sub-
10	paragraph (B) of this paragraph.
11	"(B) Relief.—
12	"(i) In general.—The plaintiff may
13	seek the following relief in a civil action
14	brought under subparagraph (A):
15	"(I) An injunction.
16	"(II) An award that is the great-
17	er of—
18	"(aa) actual damages; or
19	"(bb) damages in the
20	amount of \$500 for each viola-
21	tion.
22	"(ii) Willful or knowing viola-
23	TIONS.—In a civil action brought under
24	subparagraph (A), if the court finds that
25	the defendant willfully or knowingly vio-

1	lated subsection (c) or (d), the court may,
2	in its discretion, increase the amount of
3	the award to not more than 3 times the
4	amount available under clause (i)(II) of
5	this subparagraph.
6	"(2) Actions by States.—
7	"(A) AUTHORITY OF STATES.—
8	"(i) In general.—Whenever the at-
9	torney general of a State, or an official or
10	agency designated by a State, has reason
11	to believe that any person has engaged or
12	is engaging in a pattern or practice of vio-
13	lating subsection (c) or (d) that has threat-
14	ened or adversely affected or is threatening
15	or adversely affecting an interest of the
16	residents of that State, the State may
17	bring a civil action against the person on
18	behalf of the residents of the State for any
19	relief permitted under clause (ii) of this
20	subparagraph.
21	"(ii) Relief.—
22	"(I) In general.—The plaintiff
23	may seek the following relief in a civil
24	action brought under clause (i):
25	"(aa) An injunction.

1	"(bb) An award that is the
2	greater of—
3	"(AA) actual damages;
4	or
5	"(BB) damages in the
6	amount of \$500 for each
7	violation.
8	"(II) WILLFUL OR KNOWING VIO-
9	LATIONS.—In a civil action brought
10	under clause (i), if the court finds
11	that the defendant willfully or know-
12	ingly violated subsection (c) or (d),
13	the court may, in its discretion, in-
14	crease the amount of the award to not
15	more than 3 times the amount avail-
16	able under subclause (I)(bb) of this
17	clause.
18	"(B) Investigatory powers.—For pur-
19	poses of bringing a civil action under this para-
20	graph, nothing in this section shall prevent the
21	attorney general of a State, or an official or
22	agency designated by a State, from exercising
23	the powers conferred on the attorney general or
24	the official by the laws of the State to—
25	"(i) conduct investigations;

1	"(ii) administer oaths or affirmations;
2	or
3	"(iii) compel the attendance of wit-
4	nesses or the production of documentary
5	and other evidence.
6	"(C) EFFECT ON STATE COURT PRO-
7	CEEDINGS.—Nothing in this paragraph shall be
8	construed to prohibit an authorized State offi-
9	cial from proceeding in State court on the basis
10	of an alleged violation of any general civil or
11	criminal statute of the State.
12	"(D) Attorney general defined.—For
13	purposes of this paragraph, the term 'attorney
14	general' means the chief legal officer of a State.
15	"(3) Venue; service of process.—
16	"(A) Venue.—A civil action brought
17	under this subsection may be brought in the lo-
18	cation where—
19	"(i) the defendant—
20	"(I) is found;
21	"(II) is an inhabitant; or
22	"(III) transacts business; or
23	"(ii) the violation occurred or is oc-
24	curring.

1	"(B) Service of process.—Process in a
2	civil action brought under this subsection may
3	be served where the defendant—
4	"(i) is an inhabitant; or
5	"(ii) may be found.
6	"(g) Obligations of Interactive Computer
7	SERVICE.—A provider of an interactive computer service
8	shall, at the time of entering an agreement with a cus-
9	tomer for the provision of interactive computer service and
10	in a manner deemed appropriate by the provider, notify
11	the customer that parental control protections (such as
12	computer hardware, software, or filtering services) are
13	commercially available that may assist the customer in
14	limiting access to material that is harmful to minors. The
15	notice shall identify, or provide the customer with access
16	to material identifying, current providers of such protec-
17	tions.
18	"(h) Effect on Other Laws.—
19	"(1) NO EFFECT ON CRIMINAL LAW.—Nothing
20	in this section shall be construed to impair the en-
21	forcement of section 223 or 231 of this Act, chapter
22	71 (relating to obscenity) or 110 (relating to sexual
23	exploitation of children) of title 18, United States
24	Code, or any other Federal criminal statute.

"(2) No effect on intellectual property
LAW.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to
limit or expand any law pertaining to intellectual
property.
"(3) State Law.—Nothing in this section shall
be construed to prevent any State from enforcing
any State law that is consistent with this section. No
cause of action may be brought and no liability may
be imposed under any State or local law that is in-
consistent with this section.
"(4) No effect on communications privacy
LAW.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to
limit the application of the Electronic Communica-
tions Privacy Act of 1986 or any of the amendments
made by such Act, or any similar State law.
"(5) No effect on sex trafficking law.—
Nothing in this section (other than subsection
(e)(2)(A)(i)) shall be construed to impair or limit—
"(A) any claim in a civil action brought
under section 1595 of title 18, United States
Code, if the conduct underlying the claim con-
stitutes a violation of section 1591 of that title;
"(B) any charge in a criminal prosecution

brought under State law if the conduct under-

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1	lying the charge would constitute a violation of
2	section 1591 of title 18, United States Code; or
3	"(C) any charge in a criminal prosecution
4	brought under State law if the conduct under-
5	lying the charge would constitute a violation of
6	section 2421A of title 18, United States Code,
7	and promotion or facilitation of prostitution is
8	illegal in the jurisdiction where the defendant's
9	promotion or facilitation of prostitution was
10	targeted.
11	"(i) Definitions.—As used in this section:
12	"(1) Access software provider.—The term
13	'access software provider' means a provider of soft-
14	ware (including client or server software), or ena-
15	bling tools that do any one or more of the following:
16	"(A) Filter, screen, allow, or disallow ma-
17	terial.
18	"(B) Pick, choose, analyze, or digest mate-
19	rial.
20	"(C) Transmit, receive, display, forward,
21	cache, search, subset, organize, reorganize, or
22	translate material.
23	"(2) Broadband internet access serv-
24	ICE.—The term 'broadband internet access service'
25	has the meaning given the term in section 8.1(b) of

1	title 47, Code of Federal Regulations, or any suc-
2	cessor regulation.
3	"(3) Common carrier technology com-
4	PANY.—The term 'common carrier technology com-
5	pany' means a provider of an interactive computer
6	service that—
7	"(A) offers its services to the public; and
8	"(B) has more than 100,000,000 world-
9	wide active monthly users.
10	"(4) Information content provider.—
11	"(A) In general.—The term information
12	content provider' means any person or entity
13	that is responsible, in whole or in part, for the
14	creation or development of material provided
15	through the internet or any other interactive
16	computer service.
17	"(B) Responsibility defined.—For
18	purposes of subparagraph (A), the term 're-
19	sponsible, in whole or in part, for the creation
20	or development of material' includes affirma-
21	tively and substantively contributing to, modi-
22	fying, altering, presenting with a reasonably
23	discernible viewpoint, commenting upon, or edi-
24	torializing about material provided by another

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person or entity.

- 1 "(5) Interactive computer service.—The 2 term 'interactive computer service' means any infor-3 mation service, system, or access software provider 4 that provides or enables computer access by multiple 5 users to a computer server, including specifically a 6 service or system that provides access to the internet 7 and such systems operated or services offered by li-8 braries or educational institutions. "(6) Internet.—The term 'internet' means 9 10 the international computer network of both Federal
  - and non-Federal interoperable packet switched data networks.
  - "(7) Material.—The term 'material' means any data, regardless of physical form or characteristic, including—
    - "(A) written or printed matter, information, automated information systems storage media, maps, charts, paintings, drawings, films, videos, photographs, images, engravings, sketches, working notes, or papers, or reproductions of any such things by any means or process; and
- "(B) sound, voice, magnetic, or electronic 23 24 recordings.".
- (b) Conforming Amendments.— 25

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1	(1) COMMUNICATIONS ACT OF 1934.—The Com-
2	munications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 151 et seq.) is
3	amended—
4	(A) in section 223(h)(2) (47 U.S.C.
5	223(h)(2)), by striking "section $230(f)(2)$ " and
6	inserting "section 232"; and
7	(B) in section 231(b)(4) (47 U.S.C.
8	231(b)(4)), by striking "section 230" and in-
9	serting "section 232".
10	(2) Trademark act of 1946.—Section 45 of
11	the Act entitled "An Act to provide for the registra-
12	tion and protection of trademarks used in commerce,
13	to carry out the provisions of certain international
14	conventions, and for other purposes", approved July
15	5, 1946 (commonly known as the "Trademark Act
16	of 1946") (15 U.S.C. 1127), is amended by striking
17	the definition relating to the term "Internet" and in-
18	serting the following:
19	"The term 'internet' has the meaning given that term
20	in section 232 of the Communications Act of 1934.".
21	(3) Title 17, united states code.—Section
22	1401(g) of title 17, United States Code, is amend-
23	$\operatorname{ed}$ —
24	(A) by striking "section 230 of the Com-
25	munications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 230)" and

1	inserting "section 232 of the Communications
2	Act of 1934"; and
3	(B) by striking "subsection (e)(2) of such
4	section 230" and inserting "subsection (h)(2) of
5	such section 232".
6	(4) Title 18, united states code.—Part I of
7	title 18, United States Code, is amended—
8	(A) in section $2257(h)(2)(B)(v)$ , by strik-
9	ing "section 230(e) of the Communications Act
10	of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 230(c))" and inserting
11	"section 232(e) of the Communications Act of
12	1934"; and
13	(B) in section 2421A—
14	(i) in subsection (a), by striking "(as
15	such term is defined in defined in section
16	230(f) the Communications Act of 1934
17	(47 U.S.C. 230(f)))" and inserting "(as
18	that term is defined in section 232 of the
19	Communications Act of 1934)"; and
20	(ii) in subsection (b), by striking "(as
21	such term is defined in defined in section
22	230(f) the Communications Act of 1934
23	(47 U.S.C. 230(f)))" and inserting "(as
24	that term is defined in section 232 of the
25	Communications Act of 1934)".

1	(5) Controlled substances act.—Section
2	401(h)(3)(A)(iii)(II) of the Controlled Substances
3	Act (21 U.S.C. 841(h)(3)(A)(iii)(II)) is amended by
4	striking "section 230(c) of the Communications Act
5	of 1934" and inserting "section 232(e) of the Com-
6	munications Act of 1934".
7	(6) Webb-kenyon act.—Section 3(b)(1) of
8	the Act entitled "An Act divesting intoxicating liq-
9	uors of their interstate character in certain cases",
10	approved March 1, 1913 (commonly known as the
11	"Webb-Kenyon Act") (27 U.S.C. 122b(b)(1)), is
12	amended by striking "(as defined in section 230(f)
13	of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C.
14	230(f))" and inserting "(as defined in section 232 of
15	the Communications Act of 1934)".
16	(7) Title 28, united states code.—Section
17	4102 of title 28, United States Code, is amended—
18	(A) in subsection (e)—
19	(i) by striking "section 230 of the
20	Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C.
21	230)" and inserting "section 232 of the
22	Communications Act of 1934"; and
23	(ii) by striking "section 230 if" and
24	inserting "that section if"; and

- 1 (B) in subsection (e)(2), by striking "sec-2 tion 230 of the Communications Act of 1934 3 (47 U.S.C. 230)" and inserting "section 232 of 4 the Communications Act of 1934".
- 5 (8) TITLE 31, UNITED STATES CODE.—Section 6 5362(6) of title 31, United States Code, is amended 7 by striking "section 230(f) of the Communications 8 Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 230(f))" and inserting "sec-9 tion 232 of the Communications Act of 1934".
- 10 (9) National Telecommunications and in-11 FORMATION ADMINISTRATION ORGANIZATION ACT.— 12 Section 157(e)(1) of the National Telecommuni-13 cations and Information Administration Organiza-14 tion Act (47 U.S.C. 941(e)(1)) is amended, in the 15 matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking "section 230(c) of the Communications Act of 1934 16 17 (47 U.S.C. 230(c))" and inserting "section 232(e) of 18 the Communications Act of 1934".
- 19 (c) APPLICABILITY.—Subsections (c) and (d) of sec-20 tion 232 of the Communications Act of 1934, as added 21 by subsection (a), shall apply to a common carrier tech-22 nology company on and after the date that is 90 days after 23 the date of enactment of this Act.