

The Importance of Protecting Freedom of Speech in a Postmodern Culture

With the wide availability of the internet, and instantaneous communication to those across the globe, we run into the problem of how to protect Freedom of speech, what can we do, and can we not do? Do private companies have the right to censor the content on their sites? Should the government be able to delete content that hurts them? Thus, private companies and individuals have the right to censor content on their own sites, or platforms, but they should be held reliable for information on their sites.

First, what is the First Amendment of the US Constitution? Before one can look know what an Amendment of the US Constitution is, they must first know what the US Constitution is. Simply put, the US Constitution is a document created, ratified and used by all US states—except the creation and ratification which was only the original 13 states. This document was designed to “ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings and Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity”¹ Now what is the first Amendment?

Amendment I. Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.²

¹ U.S. Constitution, preamble.

² U.S. Constitution, amend. I.

This amendment, restricts Congress from making any law that could restrict or prohibit the freedom of speech, religion, or press. Hence, meaning that Congress cannot make a law banning any religion, or restrict them in any way. This first amendment also pertains to the freedom of press, or the new media. If the government could censor media, then which ever party is in office would ban or restrict any news stations from reporting ill against them or good for the other party, which would result in very bias information in the news. Thus, the first Amendment is to protect American's freedoms of speech, or religion, and of press.

Second, what about private companies versus the government? First one must look at what the amendment says, it explicitly says "Congress shall make no laws...freedom of speech"³ This amendment is to stop Congress and therefore the government from prohibiting freedom of speech for or against them. If there was no law prohibiting this, there is fear of the government becoming tyrannical. But what about private companies or individuals? This is where it can get complicated, as if one is using say Facebook or YouTube, Meta and Google have the right to censor their content, and you agree to it in the Terms of Service—those long strings of text no one ever reads. It's been established that the First Amendment only applies to government, not private companies, but should there be any restricts on these companies?

That leads way to the third point, private companies, are allowed to censor the content, but they should also be responsible for the all content, whether it be false, discriminatory, or otherwise. Contrary to what many believe, these companies should be help reliable for all information that is on their sites, especially false information. The first reason is that there are more and more children on these sites, many of which can not understand satire, or illogical arguments. The second is the rise of AI, the more and more that it is trained, the more and more wrong it becomes, as it is trained upon the internist, and when the information on there false it

³ U.S. Constitution, amend. I.

creates more false media, until we do not know what is true or not. While the source of the problem is the users, all mankind—users—are fallen men and women, and this is not a problem to be fixed, but filtering false information can be more easily implemented. Some may say that this will lead to even more censoring of the alternate party—those who do not agree with those managing the platform—and this is a legitimate problem we will run into. But on the other hand, false information can prove to me more detrimental to culture than censoring of this manner, as there is always another platform of the other party you can use, and by using both you can see both sides. Regardless, there needs to be a change, and it will take time to find the correct one.

Finally, these companies should also strive to protect the younger generation, censoring inappropriate content from them. Most companies have some sort of filter for this, but it lacks in its potential, and mostly relies on users posting that content to tell them so. Companies should also protect against predators from contacting minors, while a specific implementation of this would be quite complicated, it is a change that needs to happen. A possible solution would be to require a linked parental account, where before the child can talk with someone they parent must first approve, and can restrict certain content like images or files from being sent or opened—seen. Children are the next generation, and as a culture we must protect them from harm, or other ill intent, information is a strong weapon.

The first amendment, was created to secure all American's right to religion, right to press, and right to Freedom of Speech. But it does not apply to private companies, only the government—specifically Congress, in making laws. Contrary to popular belief, private companies—Like Meta, Google, and more—should be held reliable for all information posted on their sites, and work to ensure safety of all its uses, along with ensure true and safe information. They must also strive to protect and safeguard the next generation from harm and ill intent. In

Conclusion, private companies and individuals have the right to censor content on their own sites, or platforms, but they should be held reliable for information on their sites.