

Supreme Court  
Could Reshape  
Social Media

Are the Sites More Like  
Malls, or the News?

By ADAM LIPTAK  
WASHINGTON — The most important First Amendment cases of the internet era, to be heard by the Supreme Court on Monday, may turn on a single question: Do platforms like Facebook, YouTube, TikTok and X most closely resemble newspapers or shopping centers or phone companies?

The two cases arrive at the court garbed in politics, as they concern laws in Florida and Texas aimed at protecting conservative speech by forbidding leading social media sites from removing posts based on the views they express.

But the outsize question the cases present transcends ideology. It is whether tech platforms have free speech rights to make editorial judgments. Picking the apt analogy from the court’s precedents could decide the matter, but none of the available ones is a perfect fit.

If the platforms are like newspapers, they may publish what they want without government interference. If they are like private shopping centers open to the public, they may be required to let visitors say what they like. And if they are like phone companies, they must transmit everyone’s speech.

“It is not at all obvious how our existing precedents, which predate the age of the internet, should apply to large social media companies,” Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. wrote in a 2022 dissent when one of the cases briefly reached the Supreme Court.

Supporters of the state laws say they foster free speech, giving the public access to all points of view. Opponents say the laws trample on the platforms’ own First Amendment rights and would turn them into cesspools of filth, hate and lies. One contrarian brief, from liberal professors, urged the justices to uphold the key provision of the Texas law despite the harm they said it would cause.

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**WHAT TO KNOW** Laying out what is at stake for social media before the Supreme Court. PAGE B1



DESIREE RIOS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES  
Dr. Danny Price, a physician at Bethesda Pediatrics in Tyler, Texas, examining a 1-year-old patient.

As Medicaid Shrinks, Clinics Struggle to Survive

By NOAH WEILAND  
TYLER, Texas — Appointment cancellations and financial distress have become a constant at Bethesda Pediatrics, a nonprofit medical clinic in East Texas that is heavily dependent on Medicaid, the health insurance program for the poor.

On a recent Monday, the mother of a toddler who had a primary care appointment broke down in tears after learning the child had

End of Pandemic Policy  
Kicks Millions Off

just lost Medicaid coverage, wondering how she could pay the bill. Another mother told Dr. Danny Price, the clinic’s lead pediatrician, that she was afraid to get her child a flu shot because of the \$8 fee she would have to pay now that the child had been dropped

from Medicaid. A child with depression did not show up, most likely, Dr. Price presumed, because of having lost Medicaid coverage.

The uncertainty and panic at the clinic, tucked inconspicuously in a poor residential pocket of Tyler, Texas, highlight a little-examined consequence of the vast trimming of the Medicaid rolls since a policy that barred states from kicking anyone out of the program

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Ukraine’s C.I.A. Alliance  
Deepened Over a Decade

Kyiv Officials Courted Agency, Becoming  
Vital to U.S. Efforts Against Russia

By ADAM ENTOUS and MICHAEL SCHWIRTZ  
KYIV, Ukraine — Nestled in a dense forest, the Ukrainian military base appears abandoned and destroyed, its command center a burned-out husk, a casualty of a Russian missile barrage early in the war.

But that is above ground. Not far away, a discreet passageway descends to a subterranean bunker where teams of Ukrainian soldiers track Russian spy satellites and eavesdrop on conversations between Russian commanders. On one screen, a red line followed the route of an explosive drone threading through Russian air defenses from a point in central Ukraine to a target in the Russian city of Rostov.

The underground bunker, built to replace the destroyed command center in the months after Russia’s invasion, is a secret nerve center of Ukraine’s military.

There is also one more secret: The base is almost fully financed, and partly equipped, by the C.I.A. “One hundred and ten percent,” Gen. Serhii Dvovetskiy, a top intelligence commander, said in an interview at the base.

Now entering the third year of a war that has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, the intelligence partnership between Washington and Kyiv is a linchpin of Ukraine’s ability to defend itself. The C.I.A. and other American intelligence agencies provide intelligence for targeted missile strikes, track Russian troop movements and help support spy networks.

But the partnership is no wartime creation, nor is Ukraine the only beneficiary. It took root a decade ago, coming together in fits and starts under three very different U.S. presidents, pushed forward by key individuals who often took daring risks. It has transformed Ukraine, whose intelligence agencies were long seen as thoroughly compromised by Russia, into one of Washington’s most important intelligence partners against the Kremlin today.

The listening post in the Ukrainian forest is part of a C.I.A.-supported network of spy bases constructed in the past eight years that includes 12 secret locations along the Russian border. Before the war, the Ukrainians proved themselves to the Americans by collecting intercepts that helped prove Russia’s involvement in the 2014 downing of a commercial jetliner, Malaysia Airlines Flight 17. The Ukrainians also helped the Americans go after the Russian operatives who meddled in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Around 2016, the C.I.A. began training an elite Ukrainian commando force — known as Unit 2245 — which captured Russian drones and communications gear

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**TROOP DEATHS** Ukraine’s tally of 31,000 is markedly lower than the U.S. estimate of 70,000. PAGE A9

For Christians,  
I.V.F. Presents  
A Moral Divide

By ELIZABETH DIAS  
The Alabama Supreme Court ruling that embryos should be considered children has forced Americans to grapple with a mess of complicated realities about law, infertility, medicine and politics.

At the heart of the decision, there is also Christian theology. “Human life cannot be wrongfully destroyed without incurring the wrath of a holy God,” the court’s chief justice, Tom Parker, wrote in his opinion.

Among conservative Christians, the belief that life begins at conception has been a driving force behind anti-abortion policies for years. Among the most ardent abortion opponents, that thinking has also led to uncompromising opposition to in vitro fertilization.

“That is the fundamental premise of our entire movement,” said Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life, which opposes abortion. I.V.F., she said, “is literally a business model built on disposable children and treating children as commodities.”

But on the morality of I.V.F., there is a more noticeable divide between Catholics and Protestants. Catholic teaching expressly forbids it. Protestants tend to be more open, in part because there is no similar top-down authority structure requiring a shared doctrine.

Evangelical tradition has built a public identity around being pro-family and pro-children, and many adherents are inclined to see I.V.F. positively because it creates more children. Pastors rarely preach on fertility, though they may on abortion.

But the Alabama decision “is a very morally honest opinion,” said Andrew T. Walker, associate professor of Christian ethics and public theology at the Southern Baptist

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NIC ANTAYA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES  
Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has high job approval in Michigan.

Whitmer’s Test:  
Can She Deliver  
State to Biden?

By MITCH SMITH  
LANSING, Mich. — Gretchen Whitmer was planning to speak in Dearborn, Mich., at a feel-good event celebrating a health clinic founded by Muslim leaders.

It was the sort of profile-boosting appearance that Ms. Whitmer, the Democratic governor of the state, stocks her calendar with and that has helped her build a broad base of support in closely divided Michigan. But this was late October, in the first weeks of the Israel-Hamas war, and the governor’s response to the conflict had won her few friends.

First, she posted a statement that did not include the word “Israel,” infuriating some in the Jewish community. Then she said she was “unequivocally supportive of Israel,” which was seen as a betrayal by many Arab Americans.

As word of her Dearborn visit spread on social media, some in that largely Arab American city, usually friendly political turf for Democrats, announced plans for a protest.

“WHITMER NOT WELCOME IN DEARBORN,” read one poster that was circulated by activists,

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY JASON ANDREW FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES  
At the first-ever Florida Man Games, Mikey the green iguana, “Florida Sumo,” and dressing to impress for the title of “Florida Ma’am.”

Florida Man Is In on the Joke, and Ready to Make a Game of It

By PATRICIA MAZZEI  
ST. AUGUSTINE, Fla. — The idea came to Pete Melfi, a radio personality turned podcaster in St. Augustine, Fla., last year after he organized “the laziest race in the history of races,” a 0.5-kilometer beer run, and the participants had a grand old time.

Wouldn’t it be fun, Mr. Melfi thought, to hold another race, this time with a big after-party? And what if the theme was none other than the meme that launched many thousands of headlines about his home state: Florida Man?

His wild idea morphed into an all-day competition with a series

of zany events: A mullet contest. A “mud duel” with pool noodles. An “evading arrest” obstacle course, with real sheriff’s deputies pursuing the contestants. (But, to be clear, there were no actual arrests in the race. The handcuffs came from a sex toy shop.)

“We understand that Florida is weird,” Mr. Melfi said. “We em-

brace it.” If the rest of the country — hell, the rest of the world — is going to make Florida the punchline, then those who call it home might as well be in on the joke. Don’t overthink it.

But Florida Man has been a cultural phenomenon for so long that

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Six cities are fielding teams this winter, giving women athletes the chance to shine in Latin America. PAGE A4

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Israelis have defied their government to re-establish Homesh, an outpost the nation dismantled in 2005. PAGE A6

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Volkswagen is also leaning into nostalgia as it and other foreign automakers look to gain U.S. market share. PAGE B1

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Steve Paxton upended the art form as a member of the 1960s collective Judson Dance Theater. He was 85.



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A program to resettle 1,250 families across New York State has moved only about 170 households. PAGE A12

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After South Carolina, the former president is consolidating his control of the race for the G.O.P. nomination. PAGE A14

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Alan Page, a Hall of Fame defensive tackle, fought for the rights of players in the league and served on the Minnesota Supreme Court. At 78, he is still trying to make a difference. PAGE D1

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Among the problems posed by the rollout of Nike’s new M.L.B. uniform is a shortage of pants, which is forcing some players to wear old gear for the rest of spring training. PAGE D6

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The opening night of Olivia Rodrigo’s world tour had sparkle, but making her songs feel big didn’t require much besides the songs themselves. PAGE C1

