

From: "Rep. Trey Hollingsworth" <trey@mail.house.gov> To: Carter.Moelk@mail.house.gov Subject: Poll: Media Sensationalism Date: Wed, 07 Jul 2021 15:26:12 -0400

Hoosiers, Over the last few years, competition for viewership among news organizations has gotten more fierce due to the 24-hour news cycle, increased access to online information, and ever-expanding social media platforms. To gain followers, improve site views, and increase click-through-rates, media platforms have employed various methods, including sensationalism, to attract people to their news coverage. While sensationalism does not necessarily equate to falsehoods, recently, we've seen a growing outrage from Americans that outlets are spewing "fake news" and failing to deliver truthful, unbiased reporting. As sensationalism becomes a more popular move to attract viewers, it begs the question, at what point does "click-bait" become libel? Recently, the Supreme Court of the United States rejected a case challenging libel protections for journalists and media, but Justices Clarence Thomas and Neil Gorsuch disagreed with the dismissal, arguing that libel protections should be reevaluated for a modern media age. Justice Gorsuch argued, "Large numbers of newspapers and periodicals have failed," he wrote. "Network news has lost most of its viewers. With their fall has come the rise of 24-hour cable news and online media platforms that 'monetize anything that garners clicks;'... "What started in 1964 with a decision to tolerate the occasional falsehood to ensure robust reporting by a comparative handful of print and broadcast outlets," he wrote, "has evolved into an ironclad subsidy for the publication of falsehoods by means and on a scale previously unimaginable." Justice Gorsuch and others believe that libel laws need to be reevaluated to ensure that reliable information is being broadcasted to the masses. However, many also believe that libel laws go hand-in-hand with First Amendment protections. For decades, libel laws have protected journalists' and reporters' First Amendment rights as members of the press to report on events relevant to public concern. Protecting the rights of free speech and free press are integral to our society, and opponents of revising libel laws argue any actions that potentially weaken the press' ability to report without consequence should not be taken lightly.

QUESTION OF THE WEEK: Do you think we should lower the bar for bringing libel suits against the media as sensationalism increases?

☐ Yes, we should lower the bar for bringing libel suits against the media, so outlets are held accountable for sensationalism they print

☐ No, we should maintain current libel standards

☐ I don't know

☐ Other

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