

**“Censorship-Industrial Complex:
The Need for First Amendment Safeguards at the State Department”**

**House Foreign Affairs Committee
South and Central Asia Subcommittee**

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Statement for the Record

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I. Introduction

Chairman Huizenga, Ranking Member Kamlager-Dove, and esteemed members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify.¹

The Censorship-Industrial Complex poses a mortal threat to our republic.

This sprawling regime, which spans from the federal government to the civil society partners it has often funded, coordinated, and directed has sought to purge unauthorized opinions and inconvenient facts en masse under guise of combatting a purported pandemic of “mis-, dis-, and mal-information [MDM].”²

Today’s hearing highlights one of the censorship regime’s most insidious manifestations: The turning of federal agencies that are supposed to be tasked with targeting foreign adversaries instead on Americans and our core political speech.

The State Department’s Global Engagement Center (GEC) was a key cog in such efforts through the interagency entity’s fueling of the ostensibly non-governmental portion of the “counter-disinformation” ecosystem.³

As the House Small Business Committee summarized it in an interim staff report released in September of last year – building in part on the House Foreign Affairs Committee’s findings – the since-“realigned”⁴ GEC:

though subject to a strict international mandate, sourced, developed, then platformed and promoted MDM-detection tools directly to the private sector, including to tech platforms with the ability to moderate domestic speech and impact domestic business operations.⁵

¹ While appearing today in part on account of my work as an investigative journalist at *RealClearInvestigations* and columnist at *RealClearPolitics* – and to provide relevant testimony connected with the Censorship-Industrial Complex’s impact on RealClear Media Group, under which these verticals sit – all opinions are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of these or any other media outlets or organizations with which I am affiliated.

² The Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), another key cog in the Censorship-Industrial Complex, has defined “Misinformation” as that which “is false, but not created or shared with the intention of causing harm.” It has defined “Disinformation” as that which “is deliberately created to mislead, harm, or manipulate a person, social group, organization, or country.” It has defined “Malinformation” as that which “is based on fact, but used out of context to mislead, harm, or manipulate.” See: https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/mdm-incident-response-guide_508.pdf.

³ As detailed in recent testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on the Constitution: “Overwhelming evidence indicates that the federal government has deputized likeminded academic institutions, think-tanks, NGOs, “fact-checkers,” and for-profits – often receiving government funding, direction, and/or promotion, and helmed by ex-government officials – as its speech police. Federal authorities and their force multipliers have cajoled, coerced, and colluded, most notably with social media companies, to surveil and suppress unauthorized opinions and inconvenient facts at mass scale.” See: https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2025-03-25_testimony_weingarten.pdf#page=6.

⁴ <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/investigations/3274279/state-department-documents-reveal-secret-plans-censorship-new-hub/>.

⁵ The House Small Business Committee notes specifically that through the GEC’s work to develop the “Testbed methodology, the Disinfo Cloud platform, and the Tech Demo Series...the GEC and its partners” were able “to source and test surveillance and disinformation detection tools. The GEC marketed and promoted these tools, including by providing Federal funding for some.” See:

The GEC also worked with foreign governments with strict internet speech laws (including the United Kingdom and countries in the European Union (EU)) and Federal agencies with no such international restrictions to test these products.⁶

Among those the GEC supported were NewsGuard and the Global Disinformation Index (GDI), entities that threaten to put media companies that dare to dissent from establishment orthodoxy out of business.⁷

In furtherance of this Subcommittee's efforts, I will speak generally to the nexus between GEC and these two organizations; more specifically to how they have impacted outlets with which I am affiliated; and I will propose some broad legislative correctives to prevent associated attacks on our First Amendment and republic going forward.

II. The GEC's Targeting of American Media by Risk-Rater Proxies NewsGuard and GDI⁸

The GEC's stated mission was to counter "foreign...propaganda and disinformation efforts."⁹

So its financial and promotional support for the U.S.-based for-profit NewsGuard,¹⁰ which aims to "systematically defund sources of harmful misinformation" – foreign *and domestic* – was beyond problematic on its face.

https://smallbusiness.house.gov/uploadedfiles/house_committee_on_small_business_-_cic_report_september_2024.pdf#page=22. For more on the Testbed Methodology and Disinfo Cloud, see: https://smallbusiness.house.gov/uploadedfiles/house_committee_on_small_business_-_cic_report_september_2024.pdf#page=15. For more on the Tech Demo Series, see: https://smallbusiness.house.gov/uploadedfiles/house_committee_on_small_business_-_cic_report_september_2024.pdf#page=20.

⁶ The UK and the EU it should be noted are now working to implement regulations that threaten crippling penalties against American social media platforms that refuse to comport their content moderation terms to the anti-free speech standards prevailing across Europe. This represents a potential backdoor line of attack on Americans' speech. See:

https://www.realclearinvestigations.com/articles/2024/10/08/global_crackdown_how_foreign_censorship_threatens_american_free_speech_1063521.html.

⁷ These entities can be seen as an outgrowth of the "brand safety" industry, which appears to be driven by threats often emanating from the left to boycott companies whose advertisements surface near conservative media. This tells us something about the nature of the risk-rater's niche. See:

https://www.realclearinvestigations.com/articles/2021/05/13/the_highpressure_business_of_selling_woke_corporate_armor_776879.html and <https://nypost.com/2023/11/22/opinion/elon-musk-exposes-media-matters-as-an-ideological-shakedownoperation/>.

⁸ For a more comprehensive accounting, see my June 2024 written testimony for the House Small Business Committee in connection with its hearing entitled "Under the Microscope: Examining the Censorship-Industrial Complex and its Impact on American Small Businesses.":

<https://docs.house.gov/meetings/SM/SM00/20240626/117376/HHRG-118-SM00-Wstate-WeingartenB-20240626.pdf>.

⁹ <https://archive.ph/jQhVC>.

¹⁰ See: https://smallbusiness.house.gov/uploadedfiles/house_committee_on_small_business_-_cic_report_september_2024.pdf#page=51 and

https://smallbusiness.house.gov/uploadedfiles/house_committee_on_small_business_-_cic_report_september_2024.pdf#page=20.

NewsGuard does so by rating and reviewing thousands of outlets for “reliability” and creating “exclusion lists” – blacklists – for brands to provide ad agencies and ad-tech partners for use in determining where *not* to place ads.¹¹

The U.K.-based nonprofit GDI, which too received the GEC’s financial and promotional support,¹² likewise seeks to “reduce disinformation” by “remov[ing] the financial incentive” it says lurks behind it: Ad revenue.

It too arms ad-tech companies with a “dynamic exclusion list” reportedly containing 2,000 “risky”¹³ publications, *including American ones*.

Perversely then, a foreign-facing interagency entity supported non-governmental outfits that exist to put disfavored *domestic* outlets out of business – both monetarily and through granting them the imprimatur of government.¹⁴

Those outlets NewsGuard and GDI have targeted suggest they have been smeared and stigmatized for taking positions on matters from COVID-19 to the War in Ukraine contrary to those of the political establishment, consequently incurring financial and reputational damage.

NewsGuard’s alleged viewpoint discrimination can be seen in the significantly higher scores on average that it has lavished on left-leaning sources over right-leaning ones. Its seeming bias can also be observed in the Kafkaesque correspondence dissident sources left and right have had with its raters when challenging seemingly unmerited scores. The message seems clear: Toe the NewsGuard line or face the consequences.

¹¹ <https://www.newsguardtech.com/special-reports/brands-send-billions-to-misinformation-websites-newsguard-comscore-report/>.

¹² See: https://smallbusiness.house.gov/uploadedfiles/house_committee_on_small_business_-_cic_report_september_2024.pdf#page=24 and https://smallbusiness.house.gov/uploadedfiles/house_committee_on_small_business_-_cic_report_september_2024.pdf#page=20.

¹³ The purported “risk” GDI aims to help ad companies mitigate is that their clients’ brands might surface on sites that traffic in “disinformation,” subjecting them to boycotts and other harms. Refer to Footnote 7 for more on related “brand safety.”

¹⁴ The House Small Business Committee’s September 2024 interim staff report notes that “The GEC...promoted the GDI through the Disinfo Cloud Twitter account and directly to the private sector in the [disinformation-focused] TET’s [Technology Engagement Team’s] communications with technology companies, including Zoom and Google/YouTube. It is therefore not only the Federal funding that is at issue, but also promotion and validation with the weight of the U.S. State Department behind it.” See: https://smallbusiness.house.gov/uploadedfiles/house_committee_on_small_business_-_cic_report_september_2024.pdf#page=33. Of the GEC’s promotional support for NewsGuard, the report notes: “NewsGuard has received Federal funding from the GEC and the DOD. The structure of these awards included licensing fees for the Misinformation Fingerprints database [a licensable dataset of viral purported falsehoods and ‘misinformation narratives’ ‘capturing data and examples about each hoax that can be used as a ‘Fingerprint’ for the hoax by AI and machine learning tools’] and for NewsGuard to carry out government research work that further developed its product. Those initial relationships with significant U.S. government bodies were then promoted by NewsGuard, and extensive partnerships in the private sector followed.” See: https://smallbusiness.house.gov/uploadedfiles/house_committee_on_small_business_-_cic_report_september_2024.pdf#page=51 and https://smallbusiness.house.gov/uploadedfiles/house_committee_on_small_business_-_cic_report_september_2024.pdf#page=48 on “Misinformation Fingerprints.”

GDI's blacklist is not public. But its 2022 report on "disinformation risk" among U.S. sources betrays a similar bias.¹⁵

There, it lists among its ten least risky publications nine liberal-to-progressive corporate media outlets...and *The Wall Street Journal*.

Its ten riskiest publications include nine conservative or libertarian outlets...and *RealClearPolitics*.

Subsequent to securing federal government support, NewsGuard and GDI's reach expanded dramatically, and many maligned by the entities reported plummeting ad revenues. NewsGuard achieved widespread adoption across the digital public square, including through partnerships with social media platforms, advertising agencies, and ad exchanges – influencing an incalculable number of ad buys and raising antitrust concerns.^{16,17} Major advertisers too have endorsed and partnered with GDI.^{18,19} Names on its dynamic exclusion list reportedly lost an estimated \$128 million in annual ad revenue between the list's launch in May 2020 and 2022.²⁰ GDI's executives have gloated²¹ about this outcome.

Some outlets too indicate that they have lost traffic, and operational partners.

As the *Daily Wire* and *The Federalist* summarized it in their lawsuit against the State Department concerning in part the GEC's support of NewsGuard and GDI, the risk-raters' efforts not only reduced their revenue but "their visibility on social media, and ranking results from browser searches, thereby reducing their circulation, readership, and reach, and otherwise negatively impacting their operations."²²

III. The Risk-Raters' Perverse Targeting of *RealClear*

¹⁵ <https://archive.is/zbN4V#selection-381.0-388.3>.

¹⁶ https://smallbusiness.house.gov/uploadedfiles/house_committee_on_small_business_-_cic_report_september_2024.pdf#page=57.

¹⁷ https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/ftc_gov/pdf/ferguson-goat-concurrence.pdf#page=3.

¹⁸ <https://archive.ph/OrNO6#selection-889.0-919.118>.

¹⁹ NewsGuard and GDI's collective influence could be seen in the reliance of the advertising industry's now-defunct consortium par excellence on the two entities' ratings. A July 2024 report from the House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government indicated that the World Federation of Advertisers, representing approximately 90% of global advertising spend, had, through its Global Alliance for Responsible Media initiative, helped organize "large corporations, advertising agencies, and industry associations" to engage in "boycotts and other coordinated action to demonetize platforms, podcasts, news outlets, and other content deemed disfavored by GARM and its members." Targets included, among others, X and Elon Musk, Spotify with respect to its hosting of "The Joe Rogan Experience," and outlets including *Fox News*, *The Daily Wire*, and *Breitbart News*. GARM encouraged its members to rely on NewsGuard and the Global Disinformation Index for combatting disinformation. See: <https://judiciary.house.gov/sites/evo-media-document/2024-07-10%20GARMs%20Harm%20-%20How%20the%20Worlds%20Biggest%20Brands%20Seek%20to%20Control%20Online%20Speech.pdf>.

²⁰ https://smallbusiness.house.gov/uploadedfiles/house_committee_on_small_business_-_cic_report_september_2024.pdf#page=29.

²¹ https://www.youtube.com/live/FmcbVhx99yg?si=456aBwfNyxdF_6Zv&t=4225.

²² <https://nclalegal.org/filing/complaint-for-declaratory-and-injunctive-relief-12/>.

Our experience at *RealClearPolitics (RCP)* and *RealClearInvestigations (RCI)* with these “censorship-by-risk-rating” entities may be more troubling than what others have observed given the nature of our work. Certainly, it tells us something disturbing about the nature of the Censorship-Industrial Complex.

RCP’s mission is to “facilitate meaningful discourse on governance, campaigns, elections, and public policy.”²³

The site’s bread-and-butter is curating compelling analysis – from sources left and right, corporate and independent – on key issues of the day, so readers can weigh both sides.

Our ethos extends to our original reporting as well, wherein we aim to “present balanced, non-partisan analysis that empowers our readers to stay informed.”

Consequently, media bias ratings site AllSides positions *RCP* in the ideological center, alongside outlets such as *Reuters*, *The Hill*, and *The Wall Street Journal*.²⁴

Despite our reputation for fairness and quality journalism, we score a 62 on NewsGuard’s 100-point scale – based on the subjective assessments of NewsGuard’s journalists, who analyze a sample of other journalists’ work to render judgment on whole outlets.

Remarkably, NewsGuard dings us in part for our purportedly “undisclosed” conservative bent.

The implication is that it either dismisses the viewpoint diversity that we promote as a *feature*, or worse, sees the promotion of viewpoint diversity as a *bug*.

RCP, mind you, ranks below *NPR*, *Politico*, and the *Washington Post* – all of which have garnered perfect NewsGuard scores despite their biases and bumbles.

These scores influence not only advertisers, but historically up to half a billion readers given the scale of NewsGuard’s partnerships.

They appear next to sites in search results on browsers equipped with NewsGuard’s extension.²⁵ A low rating is a digital scarlet letter that tells a reader to distrust your outlet and move on to a competitor.

RealClearInvestigations curates deep-dives from sundry sources and publishes original content from journalists with diverse perspectives – some antithetical to my own.

NewsGuard has branded us biased too, albeit while giving *RCI* a rating of 80.

²³ <https://www.realclearpolitics.com/about.html>.

²⁴ <https://www.allsides.com/media-bias/media-bias-chart>.

²⁵ As detailed in my June 2024 testimony before the House Small Business Committee: “Users of browsers equipped with the raters’ extension will see numerical ratings displayed prominently alongside websites when searched. When one hovers over a site’s score, NewsGuard’s subjective description of the site, as well as a message for a particularly low scorer like ‘Proceed with Maximum Caution’ appear[] as part of a detailed ‘Nutrition Label.’” See: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/SM/SM00/20240626/117376/HHRG-118-SM00-Wstate-WeingartenB-20240626.pdf#page=3>.

The rater would seem to see bias in our mission to pursue stories competitors miss, or angles competitors ignore.

It took *RCI* to task for unmasking the whistleblower behind President Donald Trump's first impeachment in the face of political pressure our silent peers folded under. That is, we appear to have been punished for exposing information powerful forces wanted suppressed in a bid to present the public with a fuller picture of a hugely consequential matter.²⁶ Isn't that one of journalism's aims?

As for GDI, beyond landing on its "risky" list, *RCP* may be on its secret blacklist too.

*RealClear*²⁷ broadly has thrived despite the efforts of these entities to demonetize outlets with which they take issue.

But the Censorship-Industrial Complex that the GEC helped foster has made a highly competitive business harder and placed us at a competitive disadvantage.

Our ad revenue has declined materially, forcing us to devote substantially more time and resources to non-core focuses like fundraising.²⁸

RealClear too has seen a meaningful drop in certain search rankings.

And we have taken a reputational hit.

Though we would like to see these challenges to our media organization as validators of our fierce commitment to independence and viewpoint diversity, there is no doubt an unquantifiable reputational hit to being targeted.

Outrageously, our own tax dollars have contributed to these detrimental outcomes.

One would have thought that these rating entities would whitelist *RealClear* for providing readers with a balanced diet of news, information, and analysis.

That the opposite has occurred speaks volumes about the Censorship-Industrial Complex.

IV. Codify the Censorship-Industrial Complex's Dismantling

²⁶ As the author of the October 2019 article Paul Sperry wrote at the time: "RealClearInvestigations is disclosing the name because of the public's interest in learning details of an effort to remove a sitting president from office. Further, the official's status as a 'whistleblower' is complicated by his being a hearsay reporter of accusations against the president, one who has 'some indicia of an arguable political bias ... in favor of a rival political candidate' -- as the Intelligence Community Inspector General phrased it circumspectly in originally fielding his complaint." See: https://www.realclearinvestigations.com/articles/2019/10/30/whistleblower_exposed_close_to_biden_brennan_dnc_oppo_researcher_120996.html.

²⁷ I refer to "*RealClear*" generally to encompass *RealClearPolitics*, *RealClearInvestigations*, and the other brands comprising RealClear Media Group.

²⁸ One absurd but ironic and timely example illustrates the environment for ad revenue generation that media companies like ours have faced. Months ago, we posted video footage from an event celebrating a censored Stanford medical professor who had taken a courageous stand against the Censorship-Industrial Complex. Google flagged the video for raising purportedly "[u]nreliable and harmful claims." That doctor is the new NIH Director, Jay Bhattacharya.

Even if the risk-raters were unobjectionable in every respect, a fundamental issue would remain: Through funding and supporting such entities, government abridged our freedom of speech and of the press by proxy.

Inadvertently too, as I testified last summer, the feds provided what amounts to a subsidy for the largely like-minded corporate media sources that have benefited from seeing small and independent media companies demonetized and delegitimized.

That federal authorities have abridged our speech and picked winners and losers in the media marketplace under cover of offices or initiatives originated to combat our foreign enemies, with no domestic authority, and at times hidden behind third-party cutouts and opaque funding schemes that seem designed to obfuscate only adds to the scandal.

As for the GEC, that its efforts spanned far beyond the backing of NewsGuard and GDI and even encompassed more than just promoting a broad panoply of players in the counter-disinformation space adds insult to this injury to the First Amendment and our body politic.

During the 2020 presidential election, the GEC also served as an “external stakeholder”²⁹ in the Election Integrity Partnership (EIP) – an archetypal government-coordinated “whole-of-society” domestic censorship project – contributing to its efforts by flagging social media content with the ultimate intent for platforms to consider taking it down.³⁰ Participation alone in this project should have doomed it.

This is to say nothing, incidentally, of the fact that while the GEC came under congressional scrutiny and faced revelations from “Twitter Files” journalists, the State Department’s response was not only to largely stonewall this and other committees, but to plot attacks on its domestic

²⁹ <https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:tr171zs0069/EIP-Final-Report.pdf#page=30>.

³⁰ In the run-up to the 2020 election, the Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) helped originate, coordinate, and collude with a quartet of non-governmental counter-disinformation players to suppress disfavored views on election processes and outcomes on social media. The consortia would lobby social media companies to change their content moderation policies to suppress disfavored content; surveil social media at the level of hundreds of millions of posts for alleged violations of those policies; and flag offending items to social media companies that they often suppressed at significant rates – disproportionately targeting conservatives and other critics of the political establishment. The quartet forming the EIP included the Stanford Internet Observatory, University of Washington’s Center for an Informed Public, the Atlantic Council’s Digital Forensics Research Lab (DFRLab), and social media analytics firm Graphika – self-described “leading institutions focused on understanding misinformation and disinformation in the social media landscape.” Each had ties to the U.S. government, some highly extensive. EIP’s stated purpose was to fill the “critical gap” created by the fact no federal agency “has a focus on, or authority regarding, election misinformation originating from domestic sources within the United States.” In practice, this meant targeting for suppression skepticism about an unprecedented election cycle in which authorities enacted sweeping, pandemic-driven changes to the voting system, and in which razor-thin final results in pivotal states failed to materialize for days. The GEC would later provide grants to the DFRLab. See: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/HM/HM09/20230511/115901/HHRG-118-HM09-Wstate-WeingartenB-20230511.pdf>; https://www.realclearinvestigations.com/articles/2023/11/06/documents_shed_new_light_on_feds_collusion_with_private_actors_to_police_speech_on_social_media_990672.html; and https://www.realclearinvestigations.com/articles/2024/05/30/stanford_silicon_valley_and_the_rise_of_the_censorship_industrial_complex_1034440.html.

critics. The Biden State Department issued official press guidance³¹ to discredit now Senator Jim Banks (R-Ind.) and the reporters who blew the lid off the story: Gabe Kaminsky, and a man branded by angered congressmen as a “so-called journalist” for his efforts to expose the Censorship-Industrial Complex, my co-witness Matt Taibbi.³²

Congress’ refusal to reauthorize the GEC was a meaningful first step towards accountability given what has transpired – albeit still a gigantic leap from justice for those targeted.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio’s indication, via a January 22nd press statement, that the State Department’s “Priorities and Mission” under President Donald Trump would include efforts to “support and defend Americans’ rights to free speech, terminating any programs that in any way lead to censoring the American people” – an apparent rebuke of the GEC’s past practices – was also heartening.³³

Hopefully, it means that the reported Counter Foreign Information Manipulation & Interference Hub (R/FIMI) will not be a re-branded GEC engaged in similar mischief.

But “hope” is not a policy. The experience of the last decade has unfortunately shown the American people that foreign-facing authorities trained on our adversaries can be turned on domestic dissenters from establishment orthodoxy.

And when it comes to the Censorship-Industrial Complex, which emerged in large part out of the national security and foreign policy space, and experienced this very mission creep,³⁴ Americans’ concerns about future abuses are more than merited.

To wit, while some key censors have dissolved, restructured, or retrenched under scrutiny – which speaks volumes about the legitimacy or lack thereof of their efforts – overall, the speech police have neither dropped their arms nor recanted.

Their weapons are getting more sophisticated with the development of artificial intelligence technologies to censor at scale, some of which have been advanced with the U.S. government’s backing.³⁵

The threats from abroad via foreign regulatory regimes – sometimes working with U.S.-funded NGOs³⁶ to suppress speech under banner of combatting dangerous MDM – are only growing.

Certainly, media outlets anti-establishment, right, and center – including the likes of *RealClear* – have been paid no restitution for lost traffic, damaged reputations, and depleted ad revenue.

³¹ <https://nypost.com/2024/09/13/us-news/state-department-tried-to-discredit-reporters-republican-pol-over-conservative-blacklist/>.

³² Incidentally, Dr. Bhatthacharya received the aforementioned award, *RCP*’s Samizdat Prize, previously referenced in Footnote 28, alongside Mr. Taibbi, a recipient for his work on the “The Twitter Files.” See: https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2024/03/29/carl_cannon_samizdat_prize_winners_taibbi_devine_and_bhattacharya_stood_up_to_bullies.html.

³³ <https://www.state.gov/priorities-and-mission-of-the-second-trump-administrations-department-of-state/>.

³⁴ See: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/HM/HM09/20230511/115901/HHRG-118-HM09-Wstate-WeingartenB-20230511.pdf> and <https://docemetproductions.com/how-dhs-went-from-fighting-jihadists-to-targeting-your-tweets/>.

³⁵ https://judiciary.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/republicans-judiciary.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/NSF-Staff-Report_Appendix.pdf.

³⁶ <https://foundationforfreedomonline.com/us-funded-censorship-hubs-drive-eus-war-on-tech-companies/>.

Meanwhile, the motives and means to control the digital public square – to monopolize narrative to monopolize power – remain.

At best, the anti-speech forces on our shores may be merely lying in wait and ready to re-emerge under a future administration.

Consequently, it is incumbent upon Congress to codify the Trump administration policy to which the State Department’s early statement in part may have been responsive. The president’s first-day executive order “Restoring Freedom of Speech and Ending Federal Censorship,” which deprives the Censorship-Industrial Complex of the government personnel and resources that have served as its lifeblood, must be made permanent in law, and, perhaps even bolstered through imposing severe personal legal liability on those who would break such law.³⁷

Congress should prohibit those engaged in domestic censorship activities direct or indirect – whether “risk-raters,” NGOs, or for-profits – from receiving government grants or contracts.

Congress should consider means to erect a strict firewall between the U.S. government and our body politic a la Smith-Mundt, for example to prevent the backdooring of efforts to target Americans’ First Amendment rights via federally funded programs or NGOs that shape foreign regulatory regimes.

As I recently stated before the Senate Judiciary Committee’s Subcommittee on the Constitution, if we allow euphemistic “whole-of-society” schemes like the Censorship-Industrial Complex to persist – whereby state and civil society fuse to legitimize their weaponization against Wrongthinkers – we will be on the road to a social credit system with American characteristics.

That would be a catastrophe for our republic.

Let us avoid that fate and instead restore America to greatness by returning to our first principles, including reverence for our First Amendment.

Thank you for the honor of appearing before you to contribute to your efforts to address these existential issues, and I look forward to taking your questions.

³⁷ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/restoring-freedom-of-speech-and-ending-federal-censorship/>.