

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
“Holding Big Tech Accountable: Targeted Reforms to Tech’s Legal
Immunity”**

December 1, 2021
(As Prepared for Delivery)

INTRO

Good morning.

Big Tech companies have not been good stewards of their platforms.

I’ve been very clear to all the CEOs... Big Tech has broken my trust.

Big Tech has failed to uphold a foundational American principle – free speech and expression.

Big Tech platforms like Twitter and Facebook used to provide a promising platform for free speech and robust debates, but they no longer operate as public squares – they do NOT promote the battle of ideas. They actively work against it.

They shutdown free speech and censor ANY viewpoint that does not fit the liberal ideology.

And, Big Tech has exploited and harmed our children.

In our March hearing with the CEOs, I asked the Big Tech companies why they deserve liability protections. Congress provided them more than 20 years ago.

Unfortunately, their behavior has not improved and we only have MORE examples of them of being poor stewards of their platforms.

Big Tech has abused its power... by defining what is “true,” what we should believe, what we should think, and controlling what we read.

It's wrong.

Destroying free speech is what happens in authoritarian countries and behind the Great Chinese Firewall.

Here in America, we believe in dialogue... we defend the battle of ideas...and we used to fight to protect those foundational principles.

Rather than censor and silence speech, the answer should be **MORE** speech.

That's the American way.

Big Tech should not be the arbiters of truth... not for me, my community, our children, or any American.

Today, we should be focused on solutions that hold Big Tech accountable—for how they censor, allow and promote illegal content, and knowingly endanger our children.

It's wrong for anyone to use this opportunity to push for **MORE CENSORSHIP, MORE POWER, and MORE CONTROL** over what they determine Americans should say, post, think and do.

SECTION 230 DEMS

Which is why I am deeply troubled by the path before us today for more censorship.

One of the bills before us today - The Justice Against Malicious Algorithms Act - is a thinly veiled attempt to pressure companies to censor **MORE** speech.

The proposal will put companies on the hook for **ANY** content an algorithm amplifies or recommends that contributes to "severe emotional injury" of **ANY** person.

How does the bill define "severe emotional injury"? Well, it doesn't.

Clearly, companies will have to decide between leaving up content that may offend someone and fight it in court, or censor content that reaches a user – which do you think they'll choose?

And there is no doubt who they intend to silence – content that does not line up with liberal ideology.

OUR SOLUTIONS

While the Section 230 bill before us today pushes for MORE censorship, Republicans are fighting for free speech.

In January, we rolled out our Big Tech Accountability Platform that made clear we would protect speech and robust debates on Big Tech platforms – and we have been hard at work since then.

Today, we will discuss a number of proposals that reform Section 230.

My proposal – which I am leading along with my good friend Congressman Jim Jordan – narrowly amends Section 230 to protect free speech.

Small businesses and startups will not be impacted by our bill – we remove the largest tech companies from existing 230 protections and put them under their own set of rules.

Under my proposal:

- Big Tech will be held accountable for censoring constitutionally protected speech;
- Big Tech will no longer be able to exploit the ambiguity and discretion we see in the current law;
- Big Tech will be more responsible for content they choose to amplify, promote, or suggest;
- Big Tech will be forced to be transparent about their content decisions; and
- Conservatives will be empowered to challenge Big Tech's censorship decisions.

Amending 230 alone is not enough which is why we are taking an all-of-the-above approach that includes increasing transparency and also holding Big Tech accountable for how they intentionally manipulate and harm children for their own bottom line.

While there is agreement on the need to hold Big Tech accountable with Section 230 reforms, it is clear we have drastically different approaches and solutions.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today and I yield back.