

**Opening Statement of Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Preserving Free Speech and Reigning in Big Tech
Censorship March 28, 2023**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Good morning, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to begin today by celebrating why Americans cherish our most fundamental right of free speech.

It is how “We, the People”... innovate... create new things... make our own arguments stronger... and engage in the battle of ideas to make our communities better.

Perhaps, most importantly, it is the strongest tool people have to hold the politically powerful accountable.

That is why regimes across the world shut down free speech, arrest journalists, and limit people’s rights to question authority.

Free speech is foundational to Democracy. It’s foundational to America.

Big Tech, Big Government Collusion

Big Tech is shutting down free speech.

Its authoritarian actions violate Americans’ most fundamental rights to engage in the battle of ideas and hold the politically powerful accountable.

For the crime of posting content that doesn't fit the woke liberal agenda, Big Tech is flagging, suppressing, and outright banning users from its platforms.

Today, we are joined by several of these people who've been silenced by Big Tech. They will have a voice before our subcommittee.

Big Tech proactively amplifies its allies on the Left while weakening any dissent, creating a silo...

...an echo-chamber...

...a place where only the "right" ideas as determined by a "faceless algorithm" or "a few corporate leaders," are allowed.

House Energy and Commerce Republicans have repeatedly condemned these censorship actions.

Even if the challenges to mainstream media turn out to be correct, as was the case with the Hunter Biden laptop story.

What's worse is the government collusion with Big Tech companies to censor disfavored views and be the gatekeepers of truth.

Who deserves to be the arbiters of truth? Big Tech companies and government officials?

That sounds like actions taken by the Chinese Communist Party.

We had the CEO of TikTok before this Committee last week, where we exposed them for their ties to the Chinese Communist Party, and the censorship TikTok does on its behalf.

Let me be clear: government sponsored censorship has no place in this country, and it never will.

Section 230 Reform

A healthy marketplace of ideas is integral to everyday American life and a healthy democracy.

Social media is a place for us to connect with friends, and a place where we should be able to share our views and learn from each other.

Big Tech companies in America have benefited from the liability protections given to them by Congress under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act.

As a result, they should be a forum for public discourse, and a place for people to openly debate all ideas.

But instead, censorship on their platforms shut down these debates, and risks a long-lasting stain on our society by undermining the spirit of the First Amendment.

Protecting our Kids

At the same time this censorship is happening, Big Tech is failing to invest in tools to protect our kids.

Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram...their platforms are riddled with predators seeking to sell illicit drugs laced with fentanyl and exploit our children.

Over and over, I hear from parents who have lost a child due to targeted content by a social media platform...

...and yet instead of addressing this, Big Tech chooses to focus on shutting down certain speech.

I have said it before, and I will say it again: Big Tech remains my biggest fear as a parent, and they need to be held accountable for their actions.

President Joe Biden and his administration are on a dangerous authoritarian mission to institutionalize censorship of American voices and control the narrative to benefit their political agenda.

They've admitted to flagging "problematic" content for Big Tech companies to censor...

...the CDC, the Surgeon General, the Department of Homeland Security, and others have been involved in these efforts to silence Americans.

We also know these companies sought to establish a Disinformation Governance Board with DHS to monitor and censor Americans online.

Closing

This hearing provides us an opportunity to hear from some of those silenced by Big Tech censorship.

Americans deserve to have their voices heard.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

Thank you, and I yield back.