



SOCIAL MEDIA AND ONLINE PLATFORMS

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SECTION 1: SETTING THE LANDSCAPE

SECTION 2: POLITICS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

SECTION 3: ONLINE MOB HARASSMENT

SECTION 4: OTHER TOPICS



COMMUNICATIONS DECENCY ACT OF 1996

- Section 230c- “No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider”
- This implies that social media platforms are not considered the publisher of material posted on their platforms
- As they are not the publisher, they are immune from the liability resulting from the content published on their platform

EXCEPTIONS TO IMMUNITY

- Child pornography
- Sex trafficking
- Political ads- Honest Ads Act?
- Should there be more?

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY AND SEX TRAFFICKING

- The law requires that services must report to the proper authorities if they become aware of child pornography on their service
- If they fail to do so, these services become liable legally
- SESTA/FOSTA- (passed earlier this year)- this limits the protections of section 230 of the Communications Decency Act in relation to sex trafficking

HONEST ADS ACT

- Introduced in October 2017, this act aims “to help prevent foreign interference in future elections and improve the transparency of online political advertisements”
- Proponents of the act claim that the current laws are outdated and have not kept up with the evolution of technology
- They believe that this act would prevent foreign interference in elections by ensuring online political ads follow the same rules as ads on TV, radio, and satellite
- This has not been passed into law

HONEST ADS ACT SPECIFICS

- The act will amend the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 to include online advertisements
- Platforms with more than 50 million monthly viewers must keep track of all election related communication for those spending more than \$500 on ads
 - Specifically, they must keep track of all the ads, the targets of the ads, number of views, when it was posted, how much it cost, and contact information for the advertiser
- All platforms must “make all reasonable efforts” to prevent foreign entities from purchasing ads to influence elections

ARE THEY MEDIA COMPANIES?

- Zuckerberg (2016)- “not a traditional media company”, but Facebook “does a lot more than just distribute news, and we’re an important part of public discourse”
- Obviously, due to the scale, regulating content becomes very difficult
- Honest Ads Act- “Requiring online platforms to make all reasonable efforts...”



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ZUCKERBERG TESTIFIES BEFORE CONGRESS

- Mark Zuckerberg testified yesterday and will be testifying again today
- Among other topics, Zuckerberg addresses the issue of foreign influence in U.S. elections
- Last Friday, Zuckerberg announced changes to Facebook's ad policies



CURRENT EFFORTS

- Facebook

- All ads relating to politics will be specifically labeled as “political ads” and will specify who funded the ad
- Political advertisers must authenticate name and location via government ID and mailing address to purchase political ads
- People managing large pages will also be verified, making it more difficult for fake accounts to run viral pages

- Twitter

- Launched various efforts to combat bots
- “Transparency Center” will be launched to prevent foreign influence.



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EXAMPLE- GAMERGATE

- Zoe Quinn, a game developer, became the target of an online mob attack
- Using the #GamerGate, several twitter accounts harassed and threatened Zoe with rape, death, etc.
- Her home address was discovered and posted online, forcing her to leave her home out of fear for her safety

LAWS FOR ONLINE ABUSE

- Law is pretty loose in a lot of ways on harassment, threats, etc.
- The legality of doxxing, the publishing of private information without permission with malicious intent, is unclear
- Even when the law is clear, it can be nearly impossible to track down users violating these laws

CURRENT EFFORTS (TWITTER)

- Twitter has made updates to make it easier and quicker for users to block other users
- Twitter has also made it easier to report abusive behavior of other users
- They also recently started implementing algorithms to identify accounts that are potentially engaging in abusive behavior

“REASONABLE EFFORT” SOLUTION

- Mob attacks
 - Twitter already has a framework for detecting trending topics
 - Once trending, Twitter can perform sentiment analysis to determine a negative or positive trending topic
 - If a negative trend is present, Twitter can more closely monitor the situation
- Doxxing Addresses
 - Twitter can prevent publishing of addresses within negative trends
 - These platforms generally could prevent the publishing of addresses



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OTHER POTENTIAL AREAS

- Copyright laws
 - YouTube uses “Content IDs” to detect copyright infringement
- Mental Health of Users
 - Detect and warn against unhealthy use of their service
- Handling of User Data

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QUESTIONS???