SOCIAL MEDIA AND ONLINE PLATFORMS

PRESENTED BY: JIM MILLER
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• Proponents of the act claim that the current laws are outdated and have not kept up with the evolution of technology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
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
QUESTIONS???