

CFFS Offers Lesson on Free Speech vs. Censorship to Social Media Executives

CEO's of Twitter and Snapchat take drastic measures to limit social media reach of President

MESA, AZ, UNITED STATES, June 4, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Social media companies that take extraordinary steps to limit the ability of the leader of the free world to communicate with his constituents are in dire need of a refresher course on the Bill of Rights, according the Citizens for Free Speech (CFFS).

“

We're here today to defend free speech from one of the gravest dangers it has faced in American history.”

President Donald Trump

In the span of less than two weeks, the CEO's of Twitter and Snapchat have publicly condemned the language and tone of messaging used by President Donald J. Trump and moved to limit accessibility to his commentary.

On June 2nd, Snapchat CEO Evan Spiegel announced that the President's "snap" messages would [no longer be promoted](#) by the platform's Discover feature, even though they would remain visible to those who followed his account. In his statement, Spiegel accused the President of promoting racial violence and injustice during the ongoing protests in hundreds of American cities over the death of Minnesota resident George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer.

“We will not amplify voices who incite racial violence and injustice by giving them free promotion on Discover,” the company said in a statement.

At issue, the CEO detailed, was Mr. Trump's warning in the early days of the rioting that, “when the looting starts, the shooting starts.”

CFFS offered no opinion on the motive or intention behind the President's message—Trump did clarify that he was concerned about innocent people being shot in the chaos, and not warning that police or national guardsman would be ordered to shoot looters—but reminded Snapchat that it is his Constitutional right to say it without being restricted.

“We do not exist to protect and defend President Trump's speech because we agree with it,” explained CFFS Executive Director Patrick Wood, “because frankly, we don't always agree with it. Rather, we exist to protect his right, and the right of all Americans, to have their messages heard,

unfettered by corporate interference based on political or ideological dissent.

“For better or worse, social media platforms have effectively become the primary news source for millions of Americans, and if the algorithms put in place by the programmers allow certain viewpoints to be blasted to the masses while others—including those of the President—are muted even slightly, then free speech, free expression, and possibly even freedom of the online press are indeed being abridged.”

In defense of the decision to remove Trump from the Discover promotion feature, Spiegel declared, “Racial violence and injustice have no place in our society and we stand together with all who seek peace, love, equality, and justice in America.”

Wood did not disagree with the overall message of justice and equality being promoted by Snap, but cautioned that selective editing of commentary does nothing to promote free speech.

“On numerous occasions, Mr. Trump expressed his anger and sadness over the death of Mr. Floyd,” Wood said, “even ordering the Department of Justice and the FBI to open immediate investigations in order to secure justice for Floyd’s family. Those words should carry as much weight as those that Snapchat executives found distasteful. In fact, the First Amendment was written specifically to protect speech that others may find offensive, not for words received with unanimous agreement.”

Days earlier, Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey took the unprecedented step of attaching [“fact-checking”](#) links to the President’s tweets, claiming that some of Mr. Trump’s messages violated the company’s terms of use regarding misinformation or “glorifying violence.” Like Snapchat, Dorsey took issue with the President’s ‘looting and shooting’ comment, but their first flagged tweet was over the issue of voting-by-mail.

“There is NO WAY (ZERO!) that Mail-In Ballots will be anything less than substantially fraudulent,” Trump tweeted, “Mail boxes will be robbed, ballots will be forged & even illegally printed out & fraudulently signed.”

Twitter’s attached fact-check link sent followers to CNN and Washington Post stories refuting the notion that voting by mail could lead to fraudulent activity, which was problematic for Wood.

“The issue here isn’t that Twitter fact-checked the President,” the CFFS Director explained. “It’s the fact that they used two news sources that are routinely critical of the President as the arbiters of truth, and the fact that they have never attached such links to any other users in the history of the platform. Allowing politically-motivated moderators to decide which comments are ‘truthful’ in their minds, and which ones are lies, effectively limits the ability of some users to speak freely.”

President Trump’s response to Twitter’s fact-check policy was to issue an Executive Order that

removed immunity for certain content posted on social media platforms by third parties, allowing them to make “good faith” efforts to decide which content will be permitted.

We're here today to defend free speech from one of the gravest dangers it has faced in American history," Trump said from the Oval Office. "A small handful of powerful social media monopolies control the vast portion of all private and public communications in the United States."

Shockingly, according to Wood, the very companies impacted by the President's order have largely [refused to acknowledge it](#).

“Even as the President moves to weaken, and eventually regulate, the companies' platforms for selective censorship, they continue that very censorship by refusing to address the existence of the order. Perhaps they'll learn more about the First Amendment in a courtroom.”

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