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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021

H O U S E R E S O L U T I O N

**CONDEMNING THE MAJOR TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES, AMAZON, TWITTER,
FACEBOOK, APPLE, GOOGLE, SNAPCHAT AND YOUTUBE, FOR THEIR ATTACK ON
THE FREE SPEECH RIGHTS OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC**

Introduced By: Representative Patricia L. Morgan

Date Introduced: January 22, 2021

Referred To: House Judiciary

1 WHEREAS, Free speech and diversity of opinion is critical to the strength, health, and
2 endurance of our American political system; and

3 WHEREAS, The American public has become dependent on the Internet and social
4 media for news, political commentary, and sharing of their views. Without unimpeded and open
5 access to multiple social media vehicles and access to thought leaders and news reports, the
6 public is effectively being kept in the dark and force-fed only the opinions found acceptable by a
7 select group of technology companies which appear to have a single monolithic political
8 philosophy; and

9 WHEREAS, The apparent collusion and coordination of the major technology companies
10 to censor competitors and private individuals under the thin veil of making the Internet “safe”
11 from political opinions with which these companies do not align, is anathema to our democracy
12 and to the proper functioning of our representative form of government; and

13 WHEREAS, These technology companies are hypocritically indulging in the wanton use
14 of double standards as they claim to be protecting the public from false and dangerous speech,
15 while at the same time allowing hateful and violent rhetoric and threats from preferred actors to
16 populate their sites. Big Tech caters to the demands of the proponents of one certain philosophy
17 to the detriment of all others, and more importantly to the proper functioning of our society. They
18 cannot be allowed to continue to stifle the free exchange of ideas online by imposing narrow
19 opinion corridors curated by the most shrill voices of the outrage mob, leaving the modern

1 Internet a vacuous monoculture echo chamber, tailored to wooden pantomime rehearsals of
2 establishment-enforced talking points, but little genuine debate and discussion, with the content
3 of public versus private speech diverging ever more widely; and

4 WHEREAS, One of our Founding Fathers, Benjamin Franklin, stated, “Whoever would
5 overthrow the liberty of a nation must begin by subduing the freeness of speech.” That truth was
6 strengthened by the words of Abraham Lincoln who noted, “Free speech is our wonderful cultural
7 inheritance as free people, a rare and precious thing in a world of government brutality and
8 oppression”; and

9 WHEREAS, Totalitarian governments use censorship of political and dissenting opinions
10 to control the dialogue and their citizens. This current attack on free speech, of suspending the
11 accounts of thought leaders, shadow banning accounts, and maligning opposing views with
12 “false” labels is a disturbing and frightening embrace of those authoritarian tactics; and

13 WHEREAS, Additionally, the sudden and unwarranted de-platforming of a new
14 competitor by the big technology companies violates their responsibility to the public. By
15 silencing a competitor, they have maliciously flexed their monopoly power to not only kill off a
16 competing social media platform, but to also rob the public of a popular alternative choice on
17 which to participate in opinion sharing and dissemination; and

18 WHEREAS, The apparent alignment of these monopolistic technology companies with
19 the dominant political party creates an unhealthy and dangerous atmosphere that has the capacity
20 to seriously and irreparably damage our republic. Knowledge, a full embrace of information and
21 data, investigation of competing viewpoints and robust discussion and debate make our country
22 stronger. Censorship makes it weaker and threatens the proper functioning of our representative
23 government, our economy, and our futures; and

24 WHEREAS, Free speech is more than a “nice” idea, it is a foundational principle. It is
25 vital to the proper functioning of a healthy and enduring democracy. Censorship which silences
26 or discredits all views that diverge from those deemed acceptable to a handful of large technology
27 companies is dangerous to our American system of self-governance; now, therefore be it

28 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island hereby
29 condemns the recent attacks of these technology companies on our right to free speech and calls
30 on them to immediately reverse their malign action and instead promote free, open, and robust
31 sharing of political opinions and opposing viewpoints; and be it further

32 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
33 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to Mr. Sundai Pichai, Chief Executive Officer of
34 Google, Mr. Jeff Bezos, Chief Executive Officer and President of Amazon, Ms. Susan Wojicki,

- 1 Chief Executive Officer of YouTube, Mr. Mark Zuckerberg, Chairman and Chief Executive
- 2 Officer of Facebook, Mr. Tim Cook, Chief Executive Officer of Apple, Mr. Evan Spiegel, Chief
- 3 Executive Officer of Snapchat, and Mr. Jack Dorsey, Chief Executive Officer of Twitter.

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