

SURRY COUNTY NORTH CAROLINA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

BOARD RESOLUTION

CONDEMNING THE MAJOR TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES, AMAZON, TWITTER, FACEBOOK, APPLE, GOOGLE, SNAPCHAT AND YOU-TUBE, FOR THEIR ATTACK ON THE FREE SPEECH RIGHTS OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC.

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

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

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

WHEREAS, These technology companies are hypocritically indulging in the wanton use of double standards as they claim to be protecting the public from false and dangerous speech, while at the same time allowing hateful and violent rhetoric and threats from preferred actors to populate their sites. Big Tech caters to the demands of the proponents of a far leftwing political philosophy to the detriment of all others, and more importantly to the proper functioning of our society. They cannot be allowed to continue to stifle the free exchange of ideas online by imposing narrow opinion corridors curated by the most shrill voices of the woke outrage mob, leaving the modern internet a vacuous monoculture echo chamber, tailored to wooden pantomime rehearsals of establishment-enforced talking points, but little genuine debate and discussion, and the content of public versus private speech diverging ever more widely; and

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

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

WHEREAS, Additionally, the sudden and unwarranted de-platforming of a new competitor by the big technology companies violates their responsibility to the public. By silencing a competitor, they have maliciously flexed their monopoly power to not only kill off a competing social media platform, but to

also rob the public of a popular alternative choice on which to participate in opinion sharing and dissemination; and

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

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

RESOLVED, That this Surry County Board of Commissioners of the State of North Carolina hereby condemns the recent attacks of these technology companies on our right to free speech and calls on them to immediately reverse their malign action and instead promote free, open and robust sharing of political opinions and opposing viewpoints; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Clerk to the Board be and hereby is authorized and directed to transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to Mr. Sundai Pichai, Chief Executive Officer of Google, Mr. Jeff Bezos, Chief Executive Officer and President of Amazon, Ms. Susan Wojicki, Chief Executive Officer of YouTube, Mr. Mark Zuckerberg, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Facebook, Mr. Tim Cook, Chief Executive Officer of Apple, Mr. Evan Spiegel, Chief Executive Officer of Snapchat, and Mr. Jack Dorsey, Chief Executive Officer of Twitter, as well as Governor Roy Cooper, members of the Council of State of North Carolina, Senator Richard Burr, Senator Thom Tillis, North Carolina members of Congress, Surry County Board of Education, Elkin City Schools Board of Education, Mount Airy City Schools Board of Education, Surry Community College Board of Trustees, all members of the North Carolina General Assembly, and all 100 County Boards of Commissioners.

Adopted this 15<sup>th</sup> day of February 15, 2021.

SURRY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MARK MARION CHAIRMAN

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