



Written by [Ron Paul](#) on November 28, 2022

Separate Tech and State

Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) recently got in touch with his inner mobster and threatened Elon Musk — the new owner of Twitter and the CEO of electric car company Tesla and space ventures company SpaceX. He told Musk, “Fix your companies” or “Congress will.” As part of this threat, Markey referred to an ongoing National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) investigation into Tesla’s autopilot driving system and Twitter’s 2011 consent decree with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).



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Markey has done more than make threats: He is one of a group of Democratic senators who wrote to the FTC urging an investigation into whether Musk’s actions as the new owner of Twitter violated the consent decree or consumer protection laws. Since FTC Chair Lina Khan wants to investigate as many businesses as possible, it is likely she will respond favorably to the senators’ letter.

President Biden has also endorsed an investigation into the role foreign investors played in financing Musk’s Twitter purchase. Biden may be concerned that Musk is not likely to ban tweets regarding Hunter Biden’s business deals.

Concerns that Musk would allow tweets containing information embarrassing (or worse) to the Biden administration point to the real reason many Democratic politicians and progressive writers and activists are attacking Musk. They support efforts to suppress conservative, libertarian, and other “non-woke” speech on social media. They view the prospect of a major platform refusing to silence those who dissent from the woke mob or the Democratic Party establishment as a threat to their power. Musk further angered the left by committing what, to many Democrats (and Liz Cheney), is the ultimate hate crime — allowing Donald Trump back on Twitter.

The threat against Musk shows the threat to liberty is not just from big tech; it is from the alliance between big tech and big government.

Some conservatives think that increasing government’s power over social media is the correct way to make big tech respect free speech. However, increasing the US government’s power over social media can just end up putting more power behind government threats like those from Rep. Markey. Expanded government control over how social media companies conduct their business can also further incentivize the companies to work with the federal government to shut down free speech.

Once the government steps in with increased regulation, the risk is that greater government control over what is communicated on social media will follow. The question will just be who is calling the shots on the exercise of that control. Will the result be an increase of the liberal or “woke” pressure on social media companies to silence conservatives, libertarians, opponents of teaching critical race theory and transgenderism in schools, and those who question the safety and effectiveness of covid vaccines? Alternatively, will a new sort of pressure become dominant, maybe pressure to comply with conservative or Republican preferred limits on speech? Either way, liberty loses.



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Big tech companies silence their users to curry favor with politicians and bureaucrats, often after “encouragement” from politicians and bureaucrats. Therefore, to end big tech’s censorship, Americans should demand that all government officials — including the president — not violate the First Amendment. We must work to put an end to government officials pressuring or even “encouraging” social media platforms either to silence any American citizen because of his opinions or to downplay or suppress any news story. The way to protect free speech online is to separate tech and state.

Ron Paul is a former U.S. congressman from Texas. This [article](#) originally appeared at the Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity and is reprinted here with permission.



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