



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on October 16, 2017

Backlash Prompts Twitter to Reverse Ban of Pro-life Campaign Ad

Twitter officials reversed themselves after  coming under severe criticism for suspending a campaign ad by U.S. Senate candidate Marsha Blackburn over the ad's pro-life content.

Blackburn, who currently serves as a Republican U.S. representative from Tennessee, announced her candidacy for the Senate seat being vacated by retiring Republican Bob Corker, posting a purchased video ad on Twitter in which she declared: "I am 100 percent pro-life. I fought Planned Parenthood, and we stopped the sale of baby parts."

Blackburn earlier served as chairman of the House Select Panel on Infant Lives that investigated charges that Planned Parenthood was selling the body parts of aborted babies, which is a crime in the United States. While undercover videos exist that appear to confirm the allegations against Planned Parenthood, the abortion giant has consistently denied wrongdoing.

On October 9 Twitter suspended Blackburn's purchased ad, telling her campaign officials that the reference about baby parts "had been deemed an inflammatory statement that is likely to evoke a strong negative reaction."

Within 24 hours of the suspension, however, Twitter reversed its decision and allowed the ad, following backlash over its censorship of content. In a statement Twitter officials said: "Our ad policies strive to balance protecting our users from potentially distressing content while allowing our advertisers to communicate their messages. Nowhere is this more difficult than in the realm of political advertising and the highly charged issues that are often addressed therein. After further review, we have made the decision to allow the content in question from Rep. Blackburn's campaign ad to be promoted on our ads platform."

The statement noted that while Twitter officials had originally ruled "that a small portion of the video used potentially inflammatory language, after reconsidering the ad in the context of the entire message, we believe that there is room to refine our policies around these issues."

Among those criticizing Twitter over its censorship was Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg, a supporter of Planned Parenthood, who noted that the ad expressed "a lot of positions that people don't like, that I don't like. But the question is: Should divisive political or issue ads run? Well, our answer is yes, because when you cut off speech for one person, you cut off speech for other people." Sandberg added that "the responsibility of an open platform is to let people express themselves."

The pro-life Susan B. Anthony List also sounded off on the censorship. "We are profoundly disappointed, but not surprised, that Twitter continues to censor pro-life speech," said the group's president, Marjorie Dannenfelser. "Twitter's excuses for removing Rep. Marsha Blackburn's campaign announcement echo the difficulties we and other pro-life allies have experienced with them over several months."

Dannenfelser noted that "while we have observed that this censorship seems to be applied selectively to pro-life groups, Twitter's move has broad, chilling implications for all sorts of advocacy and political speech. We hope anyone seeking to engage in political speech will join us in denouncing the censorship



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of Rep. Blackburn. Such heavy-handed tactics only backfire on those who use them.”

Following Twitter’s decision to lift the ban on Blackburn’s ad, Lila Rose, founder of the pro-life group Live Action, issued a statement saying that “Twitter was wrong to censor Rep. Blackburn’s ads, and only did the right thing when they were subjected to media scrutiny. Twitter must now lift the ban on similar advertising from Live Action and SBA List. Twitter has significant power as a media channel to influence public opinion, and just as with Representative Blackburn, they have no business silencing the pro-life voice.”

Rose was specifically referring to Twitter’s move earlier this year to ban the group’s pro-life ads as “inflammatory and offensive.” Twitter had flagged Live Action tweets that included ultrasound pictures, along with comments about Planned Parenthood and its abortion business, saying that the ads violated Twitter’s policy on sensitive topics.

As reported by LifeSitenews.com, “Live Action was informed it must delete all of its tweets calling for an end of taxpayer funding of Planned Parenthood, all of its tweets on its undercover investigations into Planned Parenthood, and any ultrasound images of pre-born children.” The pro-life news site added that “Twitter had blocked the Live Action ads since last year, but only more recently informed the group it must delete almost all of its tweets, along with its website, and create a new website to be able to do business on Twitter.”

Photo of Rep. Blackburn: sreen-grab from video ad on Twitter



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