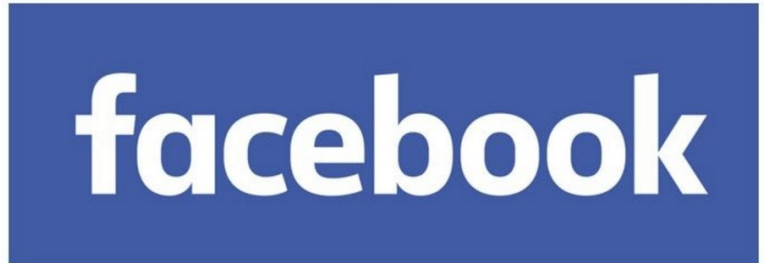




In Wake of Data Breach, Zuckerberg Calls for Facebook to be Regulated

While Facebook is reeling from the revelation of the Cambridge Analytica data breach that was used by Team Trump to sway the election, CEO Mark Zuckerberg is spending his time in anemic attempts at damage control. Besides issuing an “apology” that comes off more like a rousing game of dodge the blame, he told CNN Wednesday that he is open to the idea of governmental regulation of his company and his industry.



Zuckerberg, who has vigorously resisted any type of regulation in the past, told *CNN Money*, “Actually, I’m not sure we shouldn’t be regulated,” adding, “I actually think the question is more ‘What is the right regulation?’ rather than ‘Yes or no, should it be regulated?’”

Zuckerberg, who also issued a pseudo-apology earlier Wednesday, told *CNN Money’s* Laurie Segall, “There are things like ads transparency regulation that I would love to see,” adding, “If you look at how much regulation there is around advertising on TV and print, it’s just not clear why there should be less on the Internet.” Of course, what Zuckerberg overlooks — as usual — is the free market idea that if he really wanted that, nothing stops him from self-regulating his own company. Then, he would have a competitive edge that would encourage other platforms to follow. No force of government necessary.

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When asked about calls for him to testify before Congress, Zuckerberg gave an answer that would have made any politician proud: “So, the short answer is, I’m happy to if it’s the right thing to do.” He explained that “Facebook testifies in Congress regularly” and that “what we try to do is send the person at Facebook who will have the most knowledge about what Congress is trying to learn. So, if that’s me, then I am happy to go.”

First, that is not a short answer. Second, it is not really an answer at all. Laying the groundwork for sending a lackey when many in Congress have made it clear they want Zuckerberg is a dodge. Much like his apology earlier in the day.

As this writer said in a [previous article](#):

As for Zuckerberg’s “apology,” he sounds a little too much like Hillary Clinton in the midst of the e-mail scandal. He “takes responsibility” while dodging the blame. He writes, “This was a breach of trust between Kogan, Cambridge Analytica and Facebook. But it was also a breach of trust between Facebook and the people who share their data with us and expect us to protect it. We need to fix that,” and then adds, “In this case, we already took the most important steps a few years ago in 2014 to prevent bad actors from accessing people’s information in this way.”

Someone should tell Zuckerberg never to ruin an apology by following it up with factoids trying to diminish one’s culpability.



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on March 23, 2018

Someone should also tell him to answer a direct question with a direct answer.

But there's the rub: the data leak, the milquetoast apology, and his sudden acquiescence to having his company regulated all seem to follow a pattern. That pattern seems to be the gradual federal takeover of the web. Again, from this writer's previous article:

As a result of Facebook's collection and sloppy handling of users' data, legislators are beginning to hear (and make) calls for regulating social media. This is a classic example of *Uncle Remus's* "[briar patch](#)." It will likely be that the very people responsible for creating this situation will be the ones who help create the guidelines for that regulation. They win by creating the problem and the solution in the same laboratory.

One of those legislators is Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), who is the ranking member of the Senate Rules Committee. She is also the sponsor of the Honest Ads Act that would regulate exactly what Zuckerberg said he would like to see regulated. In fact, after saying that he thinks it "is not clear" why the Internet shouldn't be regulated just like "TV and print," Zuckerberg added — as if on cue — "I know a couple of senators are working really hard on this."

Klobuchar didn't miss her cue, either. After Zuckerberg's remarks, Klobuchar tweeted, "Just watched Mark Zuckerberg on @CNN & I was surprised to hear him say he supported the senate bill on election ads. That's my bill — the Honest Ads Act," and, "It's a new position for Facebook & we'd like to get it done before election. Twitter? Google?"

Did you see what just happened there? Facebook's fumble is about to get everyone penalized. And since — if the past is any indication of the future — the heads of these tech companies will likely have a hand in crafting the legislation; it will be the average users, not the companies, who lose in this deal.

Rather than invite government regulation, the free market should handle this and most other issues. When a platform shows it cannot be trusted, users are free to abandon it and either seek out other platforms or — and this will sound like heresy to modern ears — just don't use social media.

As for dishonest and manipulative political ads, the free market idea works there, too. Rather than pretend that it's wrong only when the other party does it, voters should reject all politicians who engage in these practices. Politicians respond to a system of rewards and punishments. If Americans continue to reward them, they will continue to do what gets them rewarded.

An appeal to government regulation is the ultimate reward.

In what appears to be an effort to stoke the fires of the Honest Ads Act, *CNN Money* reported that the act has "bipartisan support and is also sponsored by Senators Mark Warner of Virginia and John McCain of Arizona." Let's just set aside for a moment the fact that McCain is bipartisan all by himself, so his endorsement of a bill should not be viewed as a sign of wide support. McCain has crossed the aisle so often that when he goes back to the GOP side, he likely feels like a visitor.

As for bipartisanship, it has been said that America has two political parties: The Stupid Party and the Evil Party. Occasionally, they get together and do something that is both stupid and evil; this is called bipartisanship.

Regulation of social media — by the Honest Ads Act, or anything else — would easily fit that description. Americans who are concerned about preserving free speech would do well to tell Congress to leave the Internet alone. We are perfectly capable of holding social media and manipulative politicians accountable all by ourselves.



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