



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on February 23, 2021

House Democrats Launch Attack on First Amendment With Letter, Hearing on “Spread of Misinformation”

Efforts to censor conservative thought have taken an even more frightening turn as House Democrats are now pushing cable television providers to play a more heavy-handed role in stopping the “spread of misinformation.”

Democrats on the House Energy and Commerce Committee have called for a hearing on Wednesday called “Fanning the Flames: Disinformation and Extremism in the Media” that will focus on the role cable companies played in the spread of allegedly false information concerning the 2020 election, the *New York Times* reports.



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Ahead of the hearing, committee members sent a letter to Comcast, AT&T, Spectrum, Dish, Verizon, Cox, and Altice asking about their role in “the spread of misinformation,” which named only Fox News, Newsmax, and One American News Network (OANN) as perpetrators, according to Newsmax. The letter, signed by two Democratic representatives from California — Anna G. Eschoo and Jerry McNerney — demanded to know how the cable providers and distributors attempted to manage the spread of disinformation and the incitement of violence on January 6. It was also sent to Google, Hulu, Apple, Roku, and Amazon, all of which distribute cable programming.

“Misinformation on TV has led to our current polluted information environment that radicalizes individuals to commit seditious acts and rejects public health best practices, among other issues in our public discourse,” the letter reads, according to CNBC.

“To our knowledge, the cable, satellite and over-the-top companies that disseminate these media outlets to American viewers have done nothing in response to the misinformation aired by these outlets,” they wrote, according to the *New York Times*.

Claiming to cite “experts,” the letter states “the right-wing media ecosystem is much more susceptible ... to disinformation, lies, and half-truths,” *The Blaze* reports.

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The letter asks the companies, “What steps did you take prior to, on and following the Nov. 3, 2020, elections and the Jan. 6, 2021, attacks to monitor, respond to and reduce the spread of disinformation, including encouragement or incitement of violence by channels your company disseminates to millions of Americans?”

“Are you planning to continue carrying Fox News, OANN and Newsmax on your platform both now and beyond the renewal date?” the letter continues. “If so, why?”

The Hill reports the letter also addresses “misinformation” about COVID-19 shared by Fox News, OANN, and Newsmax.



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The letter and impending hearing prompted responses from both Newsmax and Fox News. Newsmax called the move an “attack on the First Amendment” and notes the hypocrisy and double-standard characterizing these efforts:

The House Democrats’ attack on free speech and basic First Amendment rights should send chills down the spines of all Americans. Newsmax reported fairly and accurately on allegations and claims made by both sides during the recent election contest. We did not see that same balanced coverage when CNN and MSNBC pushed for years the Russian collusion hoax, airing numerous claims and interviews with Democrat leaders that turned out to be patently false.

And Fox News called the congressional effort “to highlight political speech they do not like and demand cable distributors engage in viewpoint discrimination” a “terrible precedent.”

Likewise, Republican FCC commissioner Brendan Carr denounced the letter on Monday, calling it “a chilling transgression of the free speech rights that ever media outlet in this country enjoys.”

As observed by Newsmax, the hypocrisy highlighted by the letter and hearing is staggering. Where were these lawmakers when Democratic leaders and media outlets were [encouraging](#) and supporting the BLM- and Antifa-led violence that plagued most of 2020? And how can these lawmakers claim to support “science” when they violate the very essence of scientific inquiry by prohibiting dialogue that dares to question the prevailing views on COVID — especially when scientists themselves are not in agreement? If, according to the Left, the science of biological sex is not “settled,” then surely COVID science isn’t settled either.

Predictably, the *New York Times* seems to applaud the effort, referring to Newsmax and One America News Network as “right-wing” provocateurs that “embraced Mr. Trump’s claims of voter fraud,” which the *Times* dubbed “false theory.”

The *Times* also quotes Blair Levin, former FCC chief of staff under Bill Clinton, who said the hearing was a step toward what the *Times* reports is “meaningful action.”

“You have to establish a factual record that on both the election and COVID, tens of millions of Americans believe things that are just factually not true, and then try to figure out: What are the appropriate roles for the government in changing that dynamic?” Mr. Levin said.

Of course, it is easy for the *Times* to support this effort. The *Times* knows it is insulated from such action. Only the Democrats pursue these sort of anti-free speech campaigns, and the *New York Times* is safely ensconced in the Democrats’ corner.

But a Republican aide for the House Energy and Commerce Committee notes that the Democrats’ actions create a slippery slope on which even leftist publications could slide. In a statement rebuking the efforts, the aide observes:

The Majority is flirting with violating the First Amendment. Should the government be pressuring private industries to censor legally protected content and suppress the freedom of the press? No. If a free and independent press is still valued and mainstream in America, this censorship campaign should alarm every single journalist and member of the media.



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As for Wednesday's hearing, *The Hill* contends it is likely to be contentious as Democrats will focus on the election claims and January 6 protests and Republicans will use it as an opportunity to address Big Tech's censorship of the Hunter Biden story by the *New York Post*.



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