



The Honorable John Thune
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, Chairman
512 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Thune,

As groups committed to defending civil liberties for all South Dakotans, we urge you to oppose attempts in Congress to undermine the important protections for online speech in 47 U.S.C. § 230.

Section 230 is one of the most important laws protecting free expression online. Its protections are uniquely important to South Dakotans: we rely on online communities to share our thoughts and ideas with friends across the country and around the world. For rural Americans, online communities often serve as our most important connection to likeminded friends. For people of color, members of the LGBTQ community, and other marginalized South Dakotans, online communities are our lifelines.

If Congress were to pass a bill undermining Section 230, it would almost certainly result in online platforms over-relying on automated filters to censor their users' speech. When platforms lean too heavily on computerized filters, marginalized people are usually the first ones silenced.

We are deeply concerned about sex trafficking in South Dakota, and believe that this serious problem calls for serious solutions. Experts in trafficking argue that bills like S. 1693 and H.R. 1865 are the wrong solution, and would make it more difficult for web platforms and law enforcement to cooperate to apprehend traffickers. According to a statement by Freedom Network USA, a national network of organizations working to reduce trafficking, "When websites are shut down, the sex trade is pushed underground and sex trafficking victims are forced into even more dangerous circumstances." Please use your place of influence to urge your colleagues in Congress to consider real solutions to trafficking, not censorship bills that will do more harm than good.

We know that the debates over S. 1693 and H.R. 1865 are politically charged. But we also know that you understand why Section 230 is crucial to a free and open Internet. You have stood up for our digital rights in the past. Please don't give in to the political pressure to undermine them now. South Dakotans will stand with you.

Sincerely,

ACLU of South Dakota
Indivisible 605
Indivisible Rapid City
Queer South Dakota