

Section 230

“No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider.” ([47 U.S.C. § 230\(c\)\(1\)](#)).

The internet allows people everywhere to connect, share ideas, and advocate for change without needing immense resources or technical expertise. Congress recognized that for user speech to thrive on the internet, it had to protect the services that power users’ speech, from email to Yelp to Etsy to Reddit.

Section 230 embodies the principle that we are responsible for our own actions and statements online, but generally not those of others. Section 230 prevents most suits against users or services that are based on what others say.

Section 230’s protections are not absolute. It does not protect those who violate federal criminal law, or intellectual property law. It does not protect companies that create (or help to create) illegal content.

Section 230 Protects Everyone

Congress knew that the sheer volume of the growing internet would make it impossible for services to review every user’s speech. That is even more true today. As of 2025, there were more than [5.56 billion people online](#), including 5.24 billion using social media platforms.

Content Moderation For All Tastes

Congress wanted to encourage internet users and services to create and find communities. Section 230’s text explains how Congress wanted to protect the internet’s unique ability to provide “a true diversity of political discourse” and “opportunities for cultural development, and ... intellectual activity.”

Section 230 allows for web operators, large and small, to moderate user speech and content as they see fit. This reinforces the First Amendment’s protections for sites to decide what content they will distribute. With different approaches to moderating users’ speech, users can find the places online that they like, and to avoid places they don’t.

Requiring pre-publication human review is not feasible for platforms of even moderate size. In [2024](#), YouTube users uploaded 500 hours of video each minute. Automated tools, meanwhile, often result in censorship of legal and valuable content all along the political spectrum, from guns to vaccines to transgender issues to abortion. Many smaller platforms, unable to pay for these flawed automated tools or a sufficient number of human reviewers, would shut down.

Without Section 230’s protections, many online platforms would intensively filter and censor user speech, while others may simply not host user content at all. Section 230’s balanced legal and policy framework allows the internet we know to exist. Congress should not change it.

Want more information? Please contact Director of Federal Affairs India McKinney at india@eff.org.



The Electronic Frontier Foundation is the leading nonprofit defending digital privacy, free speech, and innovation.
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