

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 97

By Sparks

A RESOLUTION to recognize the importance of freedom of speech in the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

WHEREAS, born from revolution, American society has been created, has evolved, and has advanced based in part on the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, which includes freedom of speech; and

WHEREAS, freedom of speech is paramount for the American system of government and American culture; more specifically, free speech allows individuals to use their own voice to ensure "We the People" control their own destiny without government intrusion or interference; and

WHEREAS, freedom of speech is not an isolated topic, as free speech and First Amendment law bleed into multiple public policy areas such as education, criminal justice, civic participation, health care, commerce, and technology; and

WHEREAS, the First Amendment's preservation of free speech and assembly encourages open public debate, which is essential to the proper function of American democracy; and

WHEREAS, approximately one in five adults get their political news primarily through social media, and one-quarter get their news from YouTube; there is a trust deficit, and much of this deficit is rooted in how social media platforms deal with political speech; and

WHEREAS, because social media platforms are viewed as biased and untrustworthy, a growing chorus of voices on both sides of the political aisle are calling for reform; people like "Big Tech," but it does not mean that they trust them, and this distrust is degrading our national politics; and

WHEREAS, it is undeniable that companies such as Facebook, Google, and Twitter are a growing part of the public square, and polling has shown that significant majorities have favorable opinions of these companies; and

WHEREAS, yet, according to a Pew Research study, three-quarters of adults believe social media companies "intentionally censor political viewpoints that they find objectionable," and that seventy-two percent of adults say media companies have too much power and influence in politics today; and

WHEREAS, this skepticism is bipartisan, as eighty percent of Republicans and fifty-two percent of Democrats admit to having little or no confidence in social media companies to determine which posts on their platforms should be labeled as inaccurate or misleading; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we recognize the importance of freedom of speech guaranteed by the First Amendment and seek to bring awareness to the monopoly currently enjoyed by Big Tech social media platforms and their infringement on the First Amendment and the right to freedom of speech.