

STATE OF NEW YORK

9014

IN SENATE

September 30, 2020

Introduced by Sen. ORTT -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Rules

AN ACT to establish the internet media freedom task force; and providing for the repeal of such provisions upon expiration thereof

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Legislative Findings. The twenty-first century has seen an
2 increasing reliance upon social media as a source of news and informa-
3 tion. Social media platforms allow third-party users to post content on
4 an unlimited number of issues, and, unfortunately, though not solely
5 designed or intended for such use, more and more people have come to
6 rely on these third-party postings as their main source of news. Some
7 social media platforms have recently taken it upon themselves to act as
8 arbiters of truth, and have even gone so far as to block access to the
9 President of the United States. Given the expanding use of, and reliance
10 on, these social media platforms as a source of news, it is imperative
11 that use of such platforms be open and maintained for all people to
12 ensure that no perspective or piece of information is barred or blocked
13 from view by the public at large who has come to rely on such platforms
14 for information.

15 § 2. Legislative task force on internet media freedom. A legislative
16 task force on internet media freedom is hereby established to study the
17 practices and policies of social media companies that allow the posting
18 of third-party content by users, as well as other issues relating to
19 dissemination of such content, including but not limited to, forms of
20 censorship employed by social media companies. The task force will also
21 examine the impact social media has on elections, including the ability
22 of candidates and political parties to access and use the platform and
23 the use of censorship to unfairly benefit one candidate over another.

24 § 3. Composition. (a) The task force shall consist of eight members to
25 be appointed as follows: two members appointed by the speaker of the
26 Assembly, two members appointed by the temporary president of the
27 Senate, two members appointed by the minority leader of the Assembly,
28 and two members appointed by the minority leader of the Senate. All

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 appointments made by legislative leaders to the task force shall, to the
2 extent practicable, have backgrounds in news publishing, including
3 online media publishing, and/or the study of law.

4 (b) Members of the task force shall serve without compensation.

5 (c) The members of the task force shall elect, by a majority vote, one
6 of its appointed members to serve as a chair.

7 § 4. Organization. (a) The task force shall meet for the first time on
8 May first, two thousand twenty-one, at which time they shall elect a
9 member to serve as a chair of the task force pursuant to subdivision (c)
10 of section three of this act.

11 (b) The first meeting of the task force shall be held in the State
12 Capitol, in offices made available to it by the Legislature. The
13 location of subsequent meetings shall be at the discretion of the chair
14 of the task force.

15 (c) The task force shall create and maintain a website that provides
16 access to written submissions received by it, as well as means by which
17 individuals can submit testimony and view live and archived meetings and
18 hearings of the task force.

19 § 5. Hearings. The task force shall be authorized to hold public hear-
20 ings and meetings, and to consult with any organization, educational
21 institution, or other government entity or person, to enable it to
22 accomplish its duties. The task force shall hold at least two public
23 hearings for the purpose of soliciting public comment.

24 § 6. Duties and powers. (a) To effectuate the purposes of this act,
25 the task force may request and shall receive from any department, divi-
26 sion, board, bureau, commission or other agency of the state or any
27 state public authority such assistance, information and data as will
28 enable the task force to properly carry out its powers and duties.

29 (b) The task force may hire any necessary staff to assist in the
30 discharge of its duties, and may utilize funds appropriated to it for
31 necessary expenses related to the discharge of its duties.

32 (c) The task force shall undertake an examination of existing state
33 and federal policies relating to publishing third-party content on the
34 internet, including, but not limited to:

35 (i) use of social media platforms, including, but not limited to, who
36 uses them, for what purposes are they used, and a review of usage in
37 past political campaigns;

38 (ii) safeguards that exist to ensure accuracy of information posted
39 online;

40 (iii) use of censorship to restrict publication of third-party created
41 content online;

42 (iv) statutory protections that currently exist to ensure access to
43 social media platforms; and

44 (v) liability shields that protect platform operators.

45 § 7. Report. The task force shall draft a final report detailing its
46 findings, as well as any recommendations it has on changes to state or
47 federal law, and to executive agency policies, actions, and procedures
48 relating to the use of and access to social media. Such report shall be
49 completed and delivered to the Governor, the speaker of the Assembly,
50 the temporary president of the Senate, the minority leader of the Assem-
51 bly, the minority leader of the Senate, and each member of the New York
52 State Congressional Delegation on or before December 31, 2021. The
53 report shall also be made publicly available and posted on the websites
54 of the State Assembly and Senate.

55 § 8. Dissolution. Upon completion of a final report and delivery as
56 directed by this act, the legislative task force shall be dissolved;

1 provided, however, that dissolution of this task force shall occur on or
2 before January 1, 2022.
3 § 9. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire and be
4 deemed repealed January 1, 2022.