

NSSF Voting Member Scholarship Program

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Observe any social gathering of young people today and you are almost guaranteed to see an army of bright glowing screens. The number of young adults that are constantly on social media on their phones is shocking. Even more appalling is the impact that social media has on millennials. The ads, news, or stories that youth are feed every day is entirely controlled by the social media companies. Unfortunately, many of these social media companies are not using this power responsibly. While it is a company's right to control their content concerning selling certain products, the fact that they can does not mean they should. Overall, social media platforms should not censor content concerning the lawful commerce in firearms and ammunition products for the following three major reasons: this policy fails to acknowledge the validity of this market, this policy excludes certain lawful businesses, and lastly, this policy is only a gateway for future infringements on rights.

To begin, when social media platforms censor content, they fail to recognize the content's validity in the marketplace. This has a raw negative influence that comes from censoring certain groups on a social media platform. It is almost as if social media platforms consider the commerce of firearms and ammunition unlawful and this propagates the wrong idea in the public's mind. For example, by Facebook refusing to display firearm advertisements, the population gets a biased sampling against the marketplace. For young people today, the idea of gun ownership will be falsely presented as unlawful.

Secondly, this censorship excludes lawful business. Often the same people that are lobbying for equal rights among certain people groups are lobbying against gun rights. A fallacy arises, however, when they fight for rights for one group and blatantly take rights away from another group. They are making a judgment about the right to bear arms and forcing that judgment on others. How can they say that it is ok to take this option away from their users when they argue for transparency and rights on other political issues? This action may seem subtle, but it can have monumental political influence in the coming years. As young people become voters, workers, and leaders of this country they will be biased toward the information that has been fed them on their social media feed.

Lastly, when social media platforms censor content they open a gateway for future infringements on rights. When companies like Instagram, Facebook, or even Google begin to not show gun advertisements or user posts that picture firearms, there is very little stopping them from expanding this policy to not show any firearms or ammunition. In fact, some social media platforms restrict having firearms in profile pictures and from user posts. When it comes to progressive movements, such as this one, history has shown us that abuse of power is not only possible but expected.

Overall, each of these points leads to one major conclusion: censorship on social media platforms indoctrinates users, especially the younger population, and gives big-name tech companies the power to shape future political trends. By censoring lawful businesses, companies fail to recognize the firearm and ammunition industries as valid contributors in the market. Social media also currently paints a false picture of the market to its users. In doing so, they hurt the population's ability to see and access those businesses. Lastly, this blatantly takes away rights from certain people for political advancement. With no limit to how much they can censor in sight, this is a dangerous policy. In the end, it is up to those aware of this travesty to raise these issues with the companies. If the power of the user is not utilized, we will be forced to live in the dystopia that social media platforms create for us.