



## Google-Funded Heritage Foundation Decries ‘Heavy-Handed’ Tech Regulations

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The Heritage Foundation announced Monday that it will send several leaders from their organization to the White House for Thursday’s Social Media Summit with President Donald Trump. The summit arises over widespread concerns over social media companies’ censorship of conservatives and a growing interest in regulating big tech companies as well as using antitrust laws against America’s largest technology companies such as Facebook, Google, and Amazon.

Robert Bluey, the vice president of communications and executive director of the Heritage Foundation’s the Daily Signal, decried “heavy-handed government regulation.”

The Heritage Foundation provided a statement to Breitbart News regarding the organization’s donations from Google, whether Google’s donations to the foundation skews its policies against regulating tech companies, and whether the Heritage Foundation can be viewed as credible given this relationship.

Bluey added, suggesting “there’s evidence the market is working and social media companies are responding.”

Overall, corporate support totals less than 2% of Heritage’s operating contributions.

An Echelon Insights poll released Thursday found that 48 percent of American voters back Sen. Josh Hawley’s (R-MO) Ending Support for Internet Censorship Act, which would audit social media companies for bias, and if regulators found bias in either the big tech companies’ algorithm or content moderation process, those companies would lose their Section 230 immunity.

Despite the Heritage Foundation’s appeal to the free market in the technology sector, it remains to be seen whether the company remains truly objective on whether lawmakers should consider regulating big tech, as Google donates to the Heritage Foundation and Heritage Action, the company’s activist sister organization.

Sen. Hawley has decried these “supposedly libertarian” organizations for serving as “big-tech funded apologists.”

In a comment to Breitbart News the Heritage Foundation said that, given their size and preeminence, they can remain independent to “conduct policy research based on principles that are not influenced by donations or outside pressure.”

The Heritage Foundation did not say if confirm if Google donates to them or how much they have received in donations from Google; however, they noted that “corporate support totals less than 2% of Heritage’s operating contributions.”

Breitbart News has reported on how many Washington DC conservative and libertarian organizations such as the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI), the Cato Institute, TechFreedom, and the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) receives significant donations from Google and Facebook.

However, despite the organization’s contention that the “market is working,” there remains a growing interest in regulating big tech companies to prevent them from moderating content with a political bias.

A recent poll found that nearly a majority of American voters would back Sen. Josh Hawley’s (R-MO) Ending Support for Internet Censorship Act, which would audit social media companies for political bias in either their algorithms or their content moderation process. If the audit were to find that the company had a political bias in either their algorithm or content moderation, then they would lose their Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act legal immunity.

During the White House’s summit, President Trump praised Sen. Hawley’s legislation as “very important because we have to do something” on Internet censorship.

In a response to Breitbart News noted “numerous” instances to claim that the social media companies continue to respond to market pressure surrounding political bias in their content moderation process; however, most of these instances serve as more of anecdotal evidence rather than a change in the social media companies’ policies that would prevent bias in social media companies’ content moderation.

The Heritage Foundation said that these big tech companies have hired conservatives to provide another to their usually leftist employees, although it remains to be seen how much power and influence these conservative employees have in these companies.

The conservative organization also noted some instances in which the Heritage Foundation was censored and, through social media pressure, was able to fight back against big tech’s censorship. The Heritage Foundation explained:

For example, Facebook in 2018 removed a Daily Signal video of a pediatrician warning about the dangers of puberty blockers for children. After accumulating 70 million views, the video disappeared from our Facebook Watch page. Thanks to pressure on Facebook, the video was eventually restored. More recently, a Heritage Foundation employee was unfairly suspended from Twitter. After public pressure, Twitter reversed its decision and apologized to the employee.

These instances do point to some degree of success that social media companies have responded to public outcry over censorship; although, there still remains the question over whether these organizations will make changes to their content moderation processes to ensure that conservatives and other voices do not get censored through the tech companies’ political bias.

Further, these successes only point to situations where citizens were able adequately to raise enough public pressure to force the social media company to change their decision rather than adopting policies that would enable more open dialogue on the platform and ensure that content moderation remains more politically-neutral.

“Ultimately, appointing the government as the arbiter of these disputes is likely to make everyone unhappy, and in fact will open the door for worse abuses down the road,” the Heritage Foundation added.

Despite many conservative organizations’ contention that regulation of technology companies’ content moderation would be “heavy-handed,” Sen. Hawley said Thursday during the White House’s social media summit that if big tech wants to keep their “special” Section 230 immunity, “They shouldn’t discriminate; they shouldn’t censor, they shouldn’t shut us down.”

Here is the Heritage Foundation’s full statement to Breitbart News:

The Heritage Foundation is the nation’s most broadly supported public policy research institute, with more than 500,000 members. That gives us the independence to conduct policy research based on principles that are not influenced by donations or outside pressure. Overall, corporate support totals less than 2% of Heritage’s operating contributions.

There are numerous examples of social media companies responding to market pressure to change their practices and reverse their decisions. Notably, these companies have hired conservatives to address their shortcomings and respond to market pressure. In addition, Heritage has, from time to time, found our content removed by other technology platforms. In those cases, we successfully used market pressure. For example, Facebook in 2018 removed a Daily Signal video of a pediatrician warning about the dangers of puberty blockers for children. After accumulating 70 million views, the video disappeared from our Facebook Watch page. Thanks to pressure on Facebook, the video was eventually restored. More recently, a Heritage Foundation employee was unfairly suspended from Twitter. After public pressure, Twitter reversed its decision and apologized to the employee. Ultimately, appointing the government as the arbiter of these disputes is likely to make everyone unhappy, and in fact will open the door for worse abuses down the road.

The Heritage Foundation’s authority ultimately rests on the quality, rigor, and depth of our research and analysis. We formulate our policies from a core set of principles. We also regularly engage with industry leaders on the basis of mutual respect and candor, agreeing in some areas while raising areas of disagreement when necessary. It’s because of this approach that the University of Pennsylvania’s Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program has twice ranked Heritage as the No. 1 think tank for impact on public policy and other high marks in many of its other categories.