



## Free-Speech, Uncensored Browser Launched for Conservatives

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A free-speech, anti-censorship browser for conservatives was launched Tuesday.

Called Tusk, the new browser is the brainchild of Jeff Bermant, a Santa Barbara, Calif. real estate developer and founder of the Cocoon VPN.

He said he built Tusk because he felt that free speech for conservatives was being censored by the current browsers in the market. “They really don’t carry the views of conservatives,” Bermant told TechNewsWorld. “The browser world isn’t giving conservatives a fair shake.”

Also behind the Tusk venture are two prominent Republicans who are listed on Tusk’s advisory board: Stanton D. Anderson, who has served in a number of roles in Republican administrations in Washington, D.C., and Scott W. Reed, who was campaign manager for Bob Dole’s 1996 presidential campaign and a former executive director of the Republican National Committee.

Available for both Apple and Windows products, Tusk includes a media feed that allows users to curate the news sources in the feed. According to the FAQ posted at the browser’s website, the news feed shows only articles from media outlets trusted by a user in order to promote free speech and uncensor stories buried in the search results of other browsers.

“We’ve made it easy for a conservative or someone with center-right views to pull up a news feed and see news from the right,” Bermant explained, “but because we believe in freedom of speech, we have also put in a lot of other news feeds. So if you want to see MSNBC, ABC, Mother Jones or something else, you can do that. You can change it easily.”

According to the FAQ, the news feed features popular media organizations like Fox News, The Daily Wire, OANN, Newsmax and Epoch Times, that are pre-selected for conservative users.

The browser also includes features found in competing browsers, such as bookmark and tab management, the ability to import bookmarks and settings from other browsers, support for many Chrome extensions, a built-in password manager and automatic updates.

### Search Engine on the Horizon

“At the moment, I don’t see much that makes Tusk unique as a chromium-based browser,” observed Will Duffield, a policy analyst with the Cato Institute, a Washington, D.C. think tank.

“It includes a news feed that features conservative outlets, which might be relevant to conservative users, but at the moment Tusk doesn’t offer its own search product,” he told

TechNewsWorld. “Search is usually the subject of browser-bias claims, so, while Tusk’s news feed may offer an alternative way of reaching conservative outlets, it can’t currently replace other search providers.”

According to the Tusk FAQ, a search engine is in the works. Until it’s online, the browser is using Yahoo’s search engine, although the software’s default search engine can be changed by a user.

“No doubt they think the results we get from Google, Bing and whatever else is out there skews to the left, and they want to come up with one that skews toward the right-wing sources of information that they want us to consume,” said Dan Kennedy, a professor of journalism at Northeastern University in Boston.

“Google is set up to give you search results that you as a customer will find most helpful,” he told TechNewsWorld. “In doing that, they’ve set up their algorithms so disinformation doesn’t rise to the top. What Tusk is proposing to do is make their favorite sources of information rise to the top.”

“I think most of us would consider the results from Google to be more reliable than results that emphasize right-wing sources,” he added.

### **Speech Unfettered**

While Tusk is billing itself as an alternative to mainstream browsers that censor content and muzzle free speech, Greg Sterling, co-founder of [Near Media](#), a news, commentary and analysis website, maintained that those browsers do neither of those things.

“Tusk is really talking about search results and news sources, not the browser per se,” he told TechNewsWorld. “It’s integrating its own search engine and right-leaning news feed.”

“The free speech claim only makes sense if you believe that conservative or right-leaning sites and content are being discriminated against, which they’re not according to multiple studies,” he added.

The same is true for censorship, he continued. “Browsers may filter adult content, but there’s no ideological censorship going on,” he said.

“Tusk doesn’t avoid censorship,” he noted. “It’s simply promoting right-wing news sources and sites.”

Vincent Raynauld, an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Emerson College in Boston agreed. “This is more of a PR operation than an actual transformation of how people are going to use a web browser,” he told TechNewsWorld.

“The web browser is a new market for this type of thing,” he said. “It’s tapping into the resentment that exists in some segments of the public that they can’t get access to the content that they care about.”

### **Bad Business of Stifling Speech**

“This whole idea of search curation and news curation seems to be feeding the conspiracy theories of conservatives who feel they’re not receiving the news they desire,” added Karen

Kovacs North, director of the Annenberg Program on Online Communities at the University of Southern California.

“They feed into people’s paranoia that Big Brother is controlling what they see and that data is being collected so they can be targeted because their beliefs are unpopular,” she told TechNewsWorld.

Stifling free speech would be bad business for a browser, maintained Charles King, the principal analyst with Pund-IT, a technology advisory firm in Hayward, Calif.

“Browsers often display a handful of links that users visit often, are generally popular or promoted by advertisers,” he told TechNewsWorld. “You could argue that if a browser did somehow attempt to stifle speech or dissuade users from visiting sites they prefer, it would be essentially useless for tracking consumer behavior and promoting advertisers’ products and services.”

### **Tough Competition**

If Tusk is to be competitive with other browsers, it will have to distinguish itself from them, which won’t be an easy task. “Tusk’s main feature seems to be providing a frictionless method for accessing conservative news and content, but users can do that themselves by bookmarking sites they prefer or visit regularly,” King said.

“The company says it doesn’t monitor users, collect data to sell for profit or create user profiles, but those functions are readily available in existing browsers, like DuckDuckGo and Firefox, or by using the incognito mode in browsers, like Chrome,” he observed.

“Undoubtedly there will be people on the right who’ll use it, but it will remain a niche player,” Sterling predicted. “If the economics work, however, it could be sustainable with modest usage.”