

# BROADBAND BREAKFAST

## Reforming Section 230 Will Benefit Some, Wound Others, and Confuse All

Derek Shumway

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Legislation to change Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act stands to benefit some, wound others, and downright confuse all. Discussions over whether the Internet should be moderated, and how, ensued between a panel of communications policy experts during a Cato Institute webcast on Tuesday.

The panel recalled that much of the discussion surrounding Section 230 focuses on what type of content companies should takedown. Companies are often criticized for the content they choose to leave up versus what they decide to take down. The panel agreed reaching middle ground is necessary, as too narrow or too broad a policy may have negative repercussions.

Moderation can be helpful, but even reasonable moderation practices can create unsafe situations for some users, said **Will Duffield**, a policy analyst at the Cato Institute. The debate over when moderation is appropriate will surely be cause for confusion, as differences in opinions over the matter are never-ending.

Duffield maintained that Section 230 plays a role in the internet regardless of its existence, repeal, or any other modification. Repealing Section 230 would alter the Internet as we know it, entirely.

If Section 230 were removed, it would change how content is submitted, allowing newspapers to become powerful and elite vehicles of information, said **Will Duffield**, a policy analyst at the Cato Institute, adding that there would be fewer dynamics, less interactive media, and less creativity online. **Mike Masnick**, the editor of Techdirt, said Section 230 allows companies to experiment and change as situations and context evolves.

We need to remember that small startups rely on the liability protections within Section 230, said **Kate Tummarello**, policy director at Engine adding that it is important to think about how the broad ecosystem of the Internet and the tech industry will be affected.

Some companies, especially small startups, may not have the resources required to handle a drastic alteration in Section 230 rules. Further, small companies are ill-equipped with resources to handle potential lawsuits arising from upset users—even one lawsuit can be the company's demise.

Even for large, household names, responding to Section 230 is no easy task. There is no set or recommended number of human content moderators a company needs to hire to ensure no bad content gets on its platform. Further, content moderators often experience anxiety and depression caused by the job, which employers must account for.