



*Speech for Me,
Not for Thee*

Table of Contents

Lesson Description.....	3
Fun Note	3
Objectives	3
Concepts & Key Terms.....	3
Preview Activity.....	4
Viewing Guide Instructions	4
Answers to Viewing Guide.....	4
Viewing Guide	5
Discussion & Analysis.....	6
Discuss These Lines from the Video.....	7
Quotes for Discussion.....	7
Activities	8
Quiz: Speech for Me, Not for Thee	14
Political Cartoon Activity	15
PMI Chart	16
K-W-L Chart	17
Exit Ticket	18
Transcript	19

Speech for Me, Not for Thee

Video Length: 5:10

Lesson Description

What happens when leaders claim to defend free speech—but only for people who agree with them? Explore how politicians from both major parties, when in power, have tried to silence critics. From government pressure on social media companies to threats against TV networks, the video examines the dangers of censorship, no matter who does it.

Fun Note

Originally, the Bill of Rights wasn't numbered the way we know it today. James Madison's draft included twelve proposed amendments, and what we now call the First Amendment was actually third on his list. The first two dealt with (1) how to determine the number of representatives in Congress and (2) congressional pay.

The states did not ratify those first two at the time, so the "third" amendment slid up and became "first."

So its position was more of a historical accident than deliberate design.

That said, we must also point out that the content itself reflects core Founding values: freedom of conscience, expression, and open debate. Even if it wasn't placed first intentionally, it embodies first principles—the rights that make all others possible.

It's a perfect teachable moment: sometimes *accidents of history* still carry deep symbolic truth.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- identify examples from the video that show how government officials from both parties have tried to limit speech.
- distinguish between lawful limits on speech and actions that violate First Amendment principles.
- evaluate whether today's press acts as a watchdog or a lapdog when covering those in power.
- propose ways citizens can help preserve free expression and hold media and government accountable.

Concepts & Key Terms

Censorship: the act of suppressing or limiting speech, writing, or expression that someone finds offensive or dangerous.

Constitutional Republic: a system of government in which elected representatives govern according to a written constitution that protects individual rights—even against majority opinion.

First Amendment: part of the U.S. Constitution that protects freedom of speech, press, religion, assembly, and petitioning the government.

Free Speech: the right to express opinions and ideas without government interference or punishment.

Hypocrisy: claiming to support certain beliefs or values while acting in a way that goes against them.

Partisanship: strong loyalty to a political party that can lead to bias or unfair judgment.

Watchdog: a person or group, especially in the press, that monitors those in power and alerts the public to wrongdoing.

Preview Activity

Use Think, Pair, Share to have students answer and discuss these preview questions: What does free speech mean to you, and why do you think it matters in a free society? Should people be allowed to say things that others find offensive or untrue? What role do you think the news media should play when politicians try to control what information people see or hear?

OR

Distribute copies of the K-W-L worksheet to the class. Have students fill in the K and W sections. After showing the video, have students complete the L section and answer the questions at the bottom of the worksheet.

Viewing Guide Instructions

We recommend that teachers show the video twice: first to allow students to view the video and focus on the issues presented, and second to allow them time to complete the viewing guide. After they complete the viewing guide, allow students a few minutes to work in pairs to share and verify answers.

Answers to Viewing Guide

1. companies
2. hate
3. censorship
4. corrupt
5. outrageous

Speech for Me, Not for Thee

Viewing Guide

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____ Period _____

Teacher _____

Directions: As you watch the video, fill in the blanks with the correct words.

1. During COVID, they pressured _____ to censor the Internet.
2. I would like to see it be illegal to post _____ speech.
3. Brendan Carr once said, "We must dismantle the _____ cartel and restore free speech rights."
4. Power tends to _____. Once Carr had power, he no longer supported what he'd once Tweeted.
5. You should be allowed to say _____ things. You should be allowed to say contrarian things.

Take a few moments to reflect on the video and answer these questions.

Why do you think people in power tend to change their position about free speech compared to when they were not in power? _____

Why do you think this is titled "*Speech for Me, Not for Thee*"? _____

Discussion & Analysis

1. What is the main message about free speech and government power in the video?
2. Which examples from the video show attempts to limit free speech?
3. What rights does the First Amendment protect and why are they important?
4. Where do our rights come from?
5. What does the phrase *Speech for Me, But Not for Thee* suggest about how people view free speech?
6. Why do you think the Founders included freedom of the press in the First Amendment?
7. How is “hate speech” different from speech that actually calls for violence?
8. What does it mean when someone says, “You have no right not to be offended”?
9. How did both political parties show hypocrisy about free speech in the video?
10. Why is government pressure on social media companies a free speech concern?
11. If someone truly believes in free speech, what must that person be willing to allow?
12. What did John Stossel mean when he said power tends to corrupt?
13. How can a free press act as a watchdog for the people regarding government behavior?
14. What might happen if the press acts like a lapdog instead of a watchdog?
15. How does censorship—no matter who does it—hurt a free society?
16. How is the label “misinformation” being used to limit access to information those in power either don’t like or disagree with? Why is it dangerous to let government decide what counts as “misinformation”? Who should decide?
17. How do partisanship and bias make honest, open discussion harder in society?
18. In what ways can media bias influence how citizens view government power?
19. What responsibilities do journalists have when reporting on those in power?

20. How can citizens tell the difference between watchdog journalism and partisan storytelling?
21. What can you personally do to support free speech and open debate in your school or community?
22. The video often calls the United States a democracy. Is that accurate? Explain.
23. How is a constitutional republic different from a pure democracy?
24. Why did the Founders choose a system that limits majority power?
25. How does free speech protect people who are in the minority?

Discuss These Lines from the Video

We're flagging problematic posts for Facebook that spread disinformation.

They'll take a great story and they'll make it bad. See, I think that's really illegal, personally.

There's free speech, and then there's hate speech. We will absolutely target you, go after you, if you are targeting anyone with hate speech, anything.

There's no guarantee to free speech on misinformation or hate speech.

We must dismantle the censorship cartel and restore free speech rights.

You should be allowed to say outrageous things. You should be allowed to say contrarian things. That is the bedrock of a liberal democracy.

Quotes for Discussion

if there is any principle of the Constitution that more imperatively calls for attachment than any other it is the principle of free thought – not free thought for those who agree with us but freedom for the thought that we hate.

– Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr

If there is a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment, it is that the government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable.

– William Brennan, Jr.

Propaganda is to a democracy what the bludgeon is to a totalitarian state.

– Noam Chomsky

If everybody always lies to you, the consequence is not that you believe the lies, but rather that nobody believes anything any longer.

– Hannah Arendt

If liberty means anything at all it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.

– George Orwell

The violation of free speech rights by the government in relation to specific citizens is not the only threat to free speech in the United States today. Rather, the perception that one cannot speak freely—coupled with the fear of reprisal or exasperation that our discourse makes it impossible to be heard—is feeding corrosive levels of social and political frustration. – Suzanne Nossel

If there be a time to expose through discussion the falsehood and fallacies, to avert the evil by the processes of education, the remedy to be applied is more speech, not enforced silence. – Justice Louis Brandeis

Once a government is committed to the principle of silencing the voice of opposition, it has only one way to go, and that is down the path of increasingly repressive measures, until it becomes a source of terror to all its citizens and creates a country where everyone lives in fear.

– Harry S. Truman

The press was to serve the governed, not the governors. The government's power to censor the press was abolished so that the press would remain forever free to censure the government. – Justice Hugo Black

Activities

1. Have students complete the K-W-L chart in class or for homework. (Recall that the K and W sections are to be completed before watching the video and the L section after watching the video.)
2. Have students complete the political cartoon activity in class or for homework.
3. Have students complete the PMI chart in class or for homework.
4. Have students complete and submit the Exit Ticket as they leave class.
5. Students make a short list of ways they use free speech in daily life—talking, posting online, writing opinions, or joining clubs. Then they share one example aloud and discuss why those actions matter in a free society.
6. Working in pairs, students create a T-chart with “Rights” on one side and “Responsibilities” on the other. They list what the First Amendment protects, then brainstorm the personal responsibilities that go with those freedoms.
7. Students research one real-life court case about free speech (such as *Tinker v. Des Moines* or *Texas v. Johnson*) and present a brief summary to the class.
8. Students write a short reflection on a time they strongly disagreed with something they heard. They explain how they responded and whether free speech protected that expression.
9. Working in groups, each group selects one quote from the video and explains what it reveals about power, hypocrisy, or free speech. Groups then share insights with the class.

10. Students divide the video examples into “When in Power” and “When Out of Power.” They discuss how each party’s behavior changed depending on who held authority.
11. Students write a short paragraph explaining what they think the phrase *Speech for Me, But Not for Thee* means. Then, in pairs, they compare their interpretations and highlight any differences. End with a brief class share-out to surface common themes.
12. Students bring in or find an editorial on a current issue. They underline biased words or phrases, then discuss how bias affects trust in media.
13. Students respond in a short journal entry: *What does believing in free speech really require from each of us?* Encourage them to use examples from the video or class discussion.
14. Hold a brief structured debate: *Does the phrase “Speech for Me, But Not for Thee” describe our society today?* One side argues yes, the other no. Then have the class reflect on which side made the stronger case—and why.
15. Students read examples of how people or governments try to control speech. They sort each example into “persuasion” or “coercion” and explain their choices.
16. Students find one recent news story about speech or censorship and write a short essay (in class) connecting it to an idea from the video.
17. Two teams debate whether laws should limit “hate speech.” The audience votes on which side made the stronger constitutional argument.
18. Groups create a collage or digital slide showing voices that shaped speech rights—from Jefferson and Madison to modern journalists. They add one sentence explaining each person’s impact.
19. Groups create a collage or digital slide showing voices that shaped speech rights—from Jefferson and Madison to modern journalists. They add one sentence explaining each person’s impact.
20. **Watchdogs or Lapdogs? The Power—and Responsibility—of the Press**

Purpose

To help students understand the original role of the press in a free society, evaluate whether today’s media fulfills that watchdog function, and connect those ideas to both civic responsibility and the Principle of Human Respect.

Background (Teacher Notes)

- The Founders viewed a free press as **essential to self-government**.
- The press was intended to **expose wrongdoing, question power, and inform citizens**, not serve as a government spokesperson.

- Today, some argue that the press has become partisan or timid—acting more like a **lapdog** than a **watchdog**.
- Stossel’s video shows how politicians of *both* major parties have tried to manipulate or intimidate the media.
- The challenge for a free people is to stay alert, ask questions, and protect open debate from *any* form of coercion.

Materials

- Excerpt from the *Speech for Me, But Not for Thee* transcript (Trump license threat, Psaki censorship statement, or Carr/Kimmel episode).
- Short historical quote:

“Our liberty depends on the freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost.” – Thomas Jefferson
- Optional reading: brief modern editorial showing partisan framing of the same issue.

Procedure

1. Warm-Up Discussion

Ask: “What does it mean when someone says the press should be a watchdog? What does it mean when someone says the press is behaving like a lapdog?”

Have students brainstorm what duties these ideas imply.

2. Evidence Review

Read or show the selected transcript excerpt(s) and Jefferson quote.

Discuss: How was the press acting in each example—watchdog or lapdog?

3. Analysis Task

Divide students into small groups. Each group identifies:

- One instance from recent or historical media where the press held power accountable.
- One instance where the press appeared to protect or ignore those in power.

Groups present their examples and reasoning.

4. Connection to Principles

- Revisit the Human Respect idea: persuasion vs. coercion.
- Ask: When media echo government messages, does that move society toward persuasion or coercion?
- Discuss how truthful, independent journalism supports **voluntary cooperation and informed choice**, essential to harmony and prosperity.

5. Reflection Prompt

"When the watchdog falls asleep—or joins the pack—what happens to freedom?"
Students write a short paragraph response.

Extension / Assessment Ideas

- **Create a "Media Report Card":** Students grade current media outlets on independence, fairness, and courage in questioning power.
- **Role-Play Press Conference:** Half the class as politicians, half as journalists; evaluate which questions reflect true watchdog behavior.

Connection Essay: "Explain how a free press contributes to happiness, harmony, and prosperity in society."

21. Activity: Rules That Protect Everyone (Pure Democracy vs Constitutional Republic)

Write two short "government" scenarios on the board or slides:

- **Scenario A – Pure Democracy:** Class decisions are made by simple majority vote, with no limits.
- **Scenario B – Constitutional Republic:** Class decisions are made by majority vote, but everyone's basic rights are protected by a written set of rules.

Give each group one quick decision to discuss (examples: "Should unpopular opinions be banned from class discussion?" or "Should we choose one group to speak for everyone?"). Have groups decide how their group's "government" would handle it, then share outcomes.

As a class, compare results. Guide students to see that in a pure democracy, majority power can silence minority voices, while in a constitutional republic, rights remain protected even when unpopular. Finish with the question: *Which system better safeguards free speech and individual liberty?*

Potential Scenarios for the Class Vote

- The class votes to ban students from expressing political opinions during discussions.
- The class votes to allow only one point of view to be posted on the bulletin board.
- The class votes to require everyone to stand and recite a statement before each lesson.
- The class votes to let the teacher search everyone's backpack to "keep things fair."

- The class votes to forbid students from disagreeing with the majority opinion during debates.
- The class votes to use classroom funds to buy treats, but only for people who voted yes.
- The class votes to allow only certain students to use their phones during breaks.
- The class votes to give the teacher the power to remove any book that offends someone.
- The class votes to record everyone's comments in class and report any "wrong ideas."
- The class votes to cancel group projects for students who criticize the decision.

Each one exposes a different constitutional principle — freedom of speech, religion, privacy, property, or equal protection — without targeting individuals.

Scenario	Right or Principle Involved	Connection Explanation
The class votes to ban students from expressing political opinions during discussions.	Freedom of Speech	Shows how majority rule can silence minority viewpoints.
The class votes to allow only one point of view to be posted on the bulletin board.	Freedom of the Press / Expression	Demonstrates suppression of diverse ideas and control of information.
The class votes to require everyone to stand and recite a statement before each lesson.	Freedom of Religion / Conscience	Mirrors compelled speech or forced expression of belief.
The class votes to let the teacher search everyone's backpack to "keep things fair."	Right to Privacy / Protection from Unreasonable Search	Illustrates loss of individual protection under majority approval.
The class votes to forbid students from disagreeing with the majority opinion during debates.	Freedom of Speech and Thought	Highlights tyranny of the majority silencing dissent.

Scenario	Right or Principle Involved	Connection Explanation
The class votes to use classroom funds to buy treats, but only for people who voted yes.	Equal Protection / Fairness	Shows how majority power can become discriminatory.
The class votes to allow only certain students to use their phones during breaks.	Equal Treatment / Due Process	Reflects unequal privileges granted by majority preference.
The class votes to give the teacher the power to remove any book that offends someone.	Freedom of the Press / Access to Ideas	Demonstrates how censorship can spread under majority pressure.
The class votes to record everyone's comments in class and report any "wrong ideas."	Freedom of Thought / Speech / Privacy	Parallels surveillance and self-censorship under coercion.
The class votes to cancel group projects for students who criticize the decision.	Retaliation and Free Speech	Shows punishment for dissent, a key free speech violation.

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____ Period _____

Teacher _____

Quiz: Speech for Me, Not for Thee

Directions: Select the answer that best completes the sentence.

1. The First Amendment protects the right to _____.
 - A. avoid hearing false ideas
 - B. express opinions freely
 - C. limit speech you dislike
 - D. stop online criticism
2. When officials “flag” posts for social media companies, it shows _____.
 - A. private cooperation only
 - B. free market competition
 - C. government pressure to censor
 - D. support for open debate
3. In the video, both major political parties _____.
 - A. defended all speech equally
 - B. tried to silence critics when in power
 - C. ignored speech issues completely
 - D. passed new speech laws together
4. John Stossel said government censorship is worse than company rules because _____.
 - A. it affects everyone under one government
 - B. companies never remove posts
 - C. no one can switch news sources
 - D. the law requires censorship
5. The main idea of the video is _____.
 - A. both parties misuse power to silence critics
 - B. only social media limits speech
 - C. hate speech laws protect everyone
 - D. censorship keeps democracy strong

Answer Key:

1. B
2. C
3. B
4. A
5. A

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____ Period _____

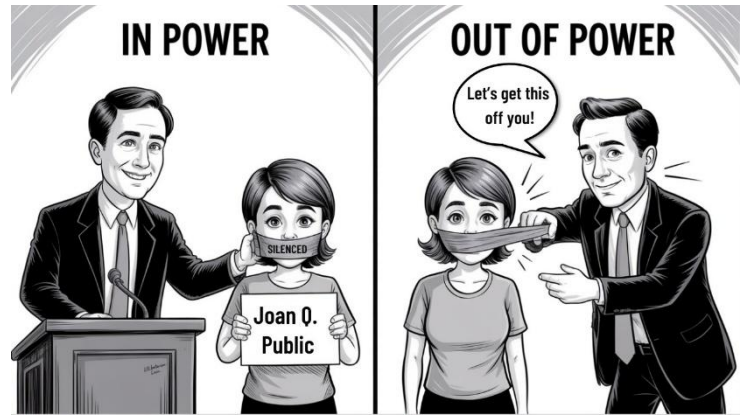
Teacher _____

Speech for Me, Not for Thee

Political Cartoon Activity

Directions: Use the political cartoon to answer the questions.

What message does this cartoon send about how politicians treat free speech when they gain or lose power?



What does *Joan Q. Public* mean and why is the woman labeled that way? _____

Why do you think the artist chose to show the same politician in both panels instead of two different people? _____

How does this cartoon connect to the video's main idea that political parties misuse power to silence critics? _____

Why is it important to defend the right to free speech even when you dislike or disagree with what's being said? _____

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____ Period _____

Teacher _____

Speech for Me, Not for Thee
PMI Chart

- P = Plus:** What might be some positive effects of protecting speech you don't like or disagree with?
M = Minus: What might be some negative effects of protecting speech you don't like or disagree with?
I = Interesting: What is interesting or surprising about protecting speech you don't like or disagree with?

+ Plusses +	- Minuses -	I

Why is it important to protect the right to speak even when you disagree with what is being said? _____

What dangers might arise if only popular or agreeable opinions are allowed? _____

Date _____

Teacher _____

Directions: Complete the **K** and **W** sections prior to watching the video. After you have seen the video, complete the **L** section and answer the questions below the K-W-L chart.

K	W	L
What I know about free speech and people in power...	What I want to know about free speech and people in power ...	What I've learned about free speech and people in power ...

Exit Ticket

Name	
Admit One	Why is it important to defend the right to free speech, even if you disagree with what's being said?

EXIT TICKET	

Name	
Admit One	Why is it important to defend the right to free speech, even if you disagree with what's being said?

EXIT TICKET	

Name	
Admit One	Why is it important to defend the right to free speech, even if you disagree with what's being said?

EXIT TICKET	

Transcript

John Stossel

Free speech is the first amendment to our Constitution for a reason. If people can't say what they want, we don't know what they really think. Other countries don't have a first amendment. British police arrest 30 people a day for what they call malicious communications.



This man was arrested merely because he repeatedly posted complaints about his daughter's school. Really. That's all he did. I was relieved when President Trump, campaigning, spoke up for free speech.

Donald Trump

If we don't have free speech, then we just don't have a free country. It's as simple as that.

John Stossel

Good for him. Free speech is crucial for democracy. Democrats, by contrast, had been eager to censor. During COVID, they pressured companies to censor the Internet.



Jen Psaki

We're flagging problematic posts for Facebook that spread disinformation.

John Stossel

Once Trump was reelected, he told his staff to:

Donald Trump

immediately stop all government censorship and bring back free speech to America.

John Stossel

Hooray. But now that he's in power and he's being criticized a lot, he started calling what the media say illegal.

Donald Trump

They'll take a great story and they'll make it bad. See, I think that's really illegal, personally.

John Stossel

On Air Force One, he threatened TV stations.

**Donald Trump**

They give you only bad publicity. I would think maybe their license should be taken away.

John Stossel

Before Trump, most attempts to control speech came from the left. Kamala Harris wanted social media censored.

Kamal Harris

They are directly speaking to millions without any level of oversight, and that has to stop.

Byron Brown

I would like to see it be illegal to post hate speech.

Tim Waltz

There's no guarantee to free speech on misinformation or hate speech.

John Stossel

But there is. It's right there. Now, I'm very familiar with left-wing censorship. Facebook paid left us to censor my videos when I said, climate change is probably not a crisis. But Facebook's a private company. They're allowed to censor. If we don't like what one company does, we can switch to other company's products. But we have just one government.

It's why government censorship is different and dangerous. Conservatives should know that. They've complained about government censorship for years.



Joe Barton

Why is Facebook censoring conservative bloggers?

John Stossel

But then, after Charlie Kirk's murder, Trump's attorney general said this:

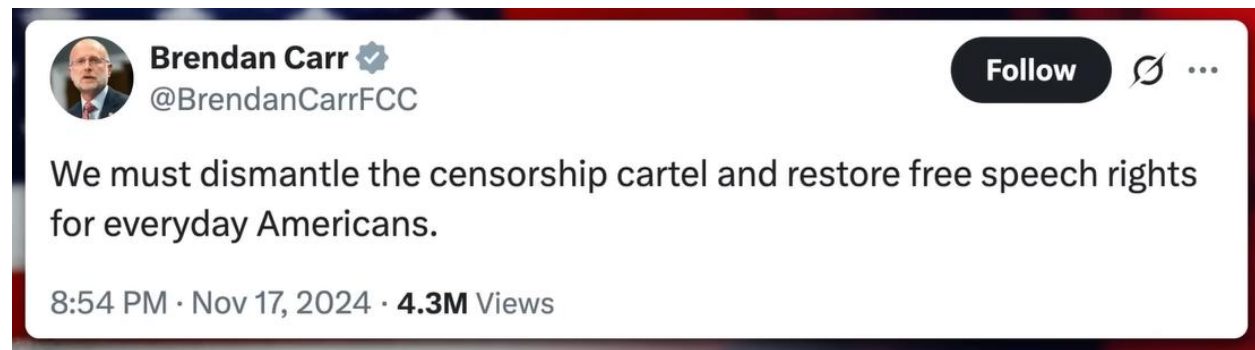
Pam Bondi

There's free speech, and then there's hate speech. We will absolutely target you, go after you, if you are targeting anyone with hate speech, anything. And that's across the aisle.

John Stossel

Whoa, they will target you?

And then there's Trump's FCC chairman. Brendan Carr once said, We must dismantle the censorship cartel and restore free speech rights.



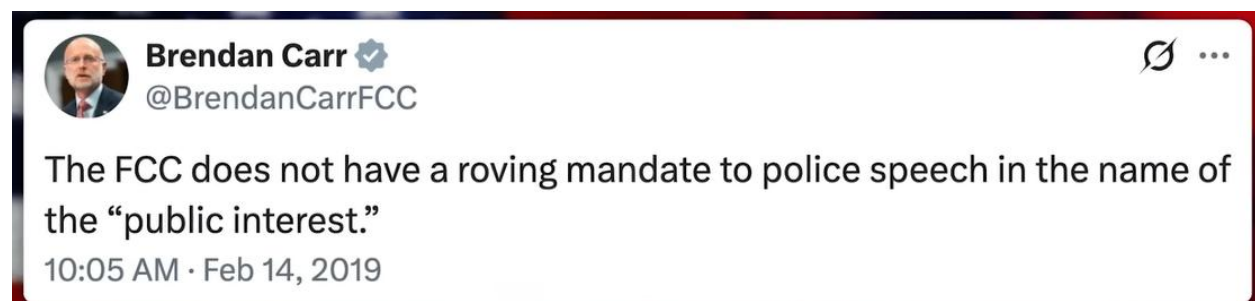
But when Jimmy Kimmel said nasty and incorrect things about Charlie Kirk's murder:

Jimmy Kimmel

The Magga Gang desperately trying to characterize this kid who murdered Charlie Kirk as anything other than one of them.

John Stossel

Carr responded by threatening ABC's local licenses. This is a man who once tweeted that the SEC does not have a roving mandate to police speech in the name of the "public interest."



But now as SEC chairman, he said:

Brendan Carr

We at the FCC are going to enforce the public interest obligation. If there's broadcasters out there that don't like it, they can turn their license into the FCC.

John Stossel

Power tends to corrupt. Once Carr had power, he no longer supported what he'd once tweeted. He even said like a mafia boss:

Brendan Carr

We can do this the easy way or the hard way.

John Stossel

My former employer quickly caved, briefly suspending Kimmel's show.



Fortunately, some Republicans pushed back.

Rand Paul

Brenen Carr has got no business weighing in on this.

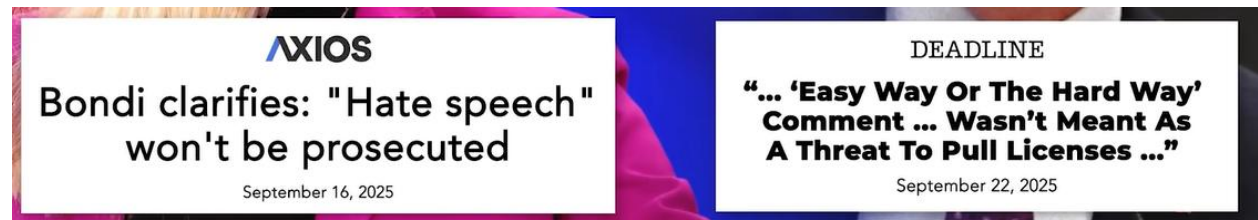
Ted Cruz

I like Brenen Carr, but what he said there is dangerous as hell.

John Stossel

Carr and Bondi later clarified their comments.

Bondi said, hate speech won't be prosecuted. And Carr said, his easy way or the hard way comment wasn't a threat to pull licenses.



Jimmy Kimmel quickly returned, and Democrats became free speech advocates.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

Reject the government's attempt to weaponize this moment into an all-out assault on free speech across the country.

John Stossel

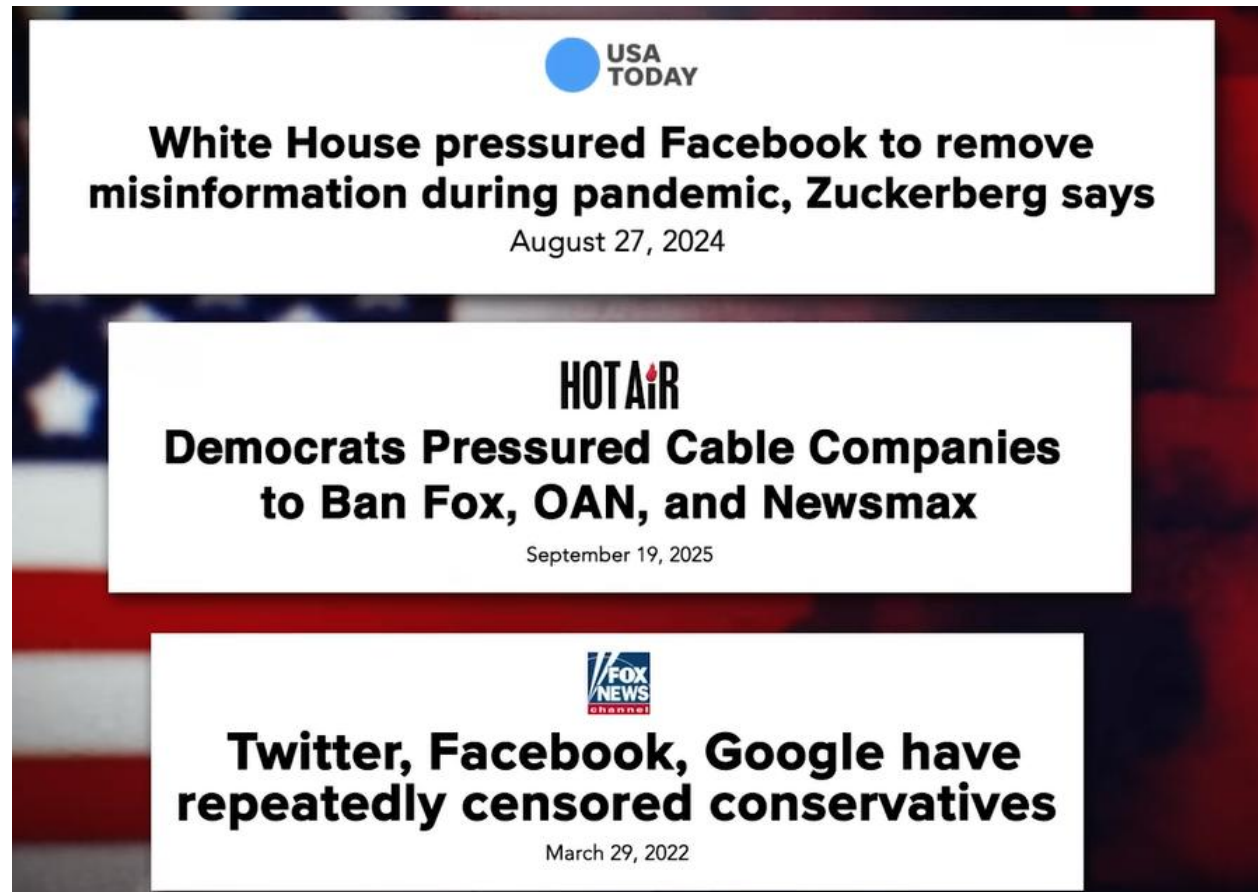
Right. Protect speech. But wait, when her party was in power, she was eager to restrict speech. She said government should:

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

...rein in our media environment so that you can't just spew disinformation.

John Stossel

Rein in, they did.



Mark Zuckerberg

People from the Biden administration would call up our team and scream at them. All these different agencies and branches of government basically just started investigating, coming after our company. It was brutal.

John Stossel

Who's ever in power wants to use that power to shut the other side up. But neither party has a right to shut the other side up. And politicians who want censorship should have paid more attention to this man:

Charlie Kirk

You should be allowed to say outrageous things. You should be allowed to say contrarian things. That is the bedrock of a liberal democracy.