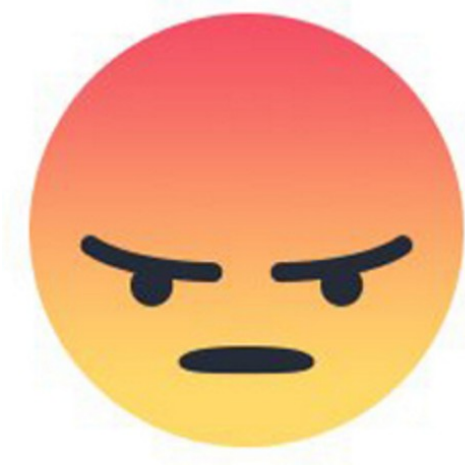


Government, Leave Facebook Alone!



By Alex Berezow, PhD — May 11, 2016



Facebook is in hot water. Gizmodo [reports](#) [1] that the site's

trending news section is biased and that the curators operating it actively suppressed some political news, even though Facebook maintains that it doesn't manipulate the news feed. The media, sniffing controversy, is pursuing the story. The [BBC](#) [2], [New York Times](#) [3], [USA Today](#) [4], and [Washington Post](#) [5] have all weighed in.

Now, Congress is demanding answers. A Senate committee [wants Facebook to answer](#) [6] for its perceived malfeasance, presumably on the grounds of engaging in "deceptive behavior."

This is dangerous nonsense. While Facebook's alleged actions are certainly newsworthy -- and its users have a right to know whether or not Facebook is behaving badly -- in no way should the U.S. government be involved. Nobody should ever have to answer to the government for engaging in free speech.

Like it or not, nobody is required to present you with "unbiased" news, even if they say they do. The tagline of Fox News is "Fair and Balanced," yet critics contend it is a right-wing outlet. Greenpeace, Union of Concerned Scientists, *Mother Jones* and countless others are dismissed by many in STEM fields as politically-motivated because they regularly distort findings to further their anti-technology agendas. Should Congress investigate them, too?

No. In a democracy, the best (and only) way to defeat bad speech is with better speech. The American Council on Science and Health provides that better speech. That's why we exist.

If Facebook wants to fill your brain with pictures of Bernie Sanders rallies, Justin Bieber tattoos, and cats playing the piano, that is their free-market right. If you don't like it, it is your right to deactivate your Facebook profile. You even have the right to be an entrepreneur and start your own social network.

Instead of asking if Facebook is suppressing certain political news, the real question the media

ought to ask is, "What does it say about our society, and the state of journalism specifically, that so many people -- [particularly Millennials](#) [7] -- prefer Facebook as their major source of political news?"

Though far more relevant, the answer to that question may be rather discomfiting.

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Links

[1] <http://gizmodo.com/former-facebook-workers-we-routinely-suppressed-conser-1775461006>

[2] <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-36254201>

[3] <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/11/technology/facebook-thune-conservative.html>

[4] <http://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/news/2016/05/09/facebook-accused-of-censoring-conservative-news-articles/84151894/>

[5] <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2016/05/10/a-facebook-trend-isnt-always-what-you-think-it-is/>

[6] <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-facebook-socialmedia-idUSKCN0Y12EU>

[7] <http://www.journalism.org/2015/06/01/facebook-top-source-for-political-news-among-millennials/>