

**ELECTRONIC FREE SPEECH AMENDMENTS**

2021 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

**Chief Sponsor: Michael K. McKell**

House Sponsor: \_\_\_\_\_

**LONG TITLE**

**General Description:**

This bill amends provisions with respect to the regulation of social media corporations.

**Highlighted Provisions:**

This bill:

- ▶ defines terms;
- ▶ requires social media corporations to, for Utah account holders, provide:
  - clear information about the social media corporation's moderation practices;
  - notice when the social media corporation uses a moderation practice with respect to a Utah account holder's account;
  - an opportunity for a Utah account holder to appeal a moderation practice that the social media corporation employs on a Utah account holder's account or post; and
  - an independent review board to review the social media corporation's moderation practices with respect to Utah account holders;
- ▶ provides, if a social media corporation violates its terms of use with respect to moderation practices:
  - a mechanism for a Utah account holder to make a complaint to the Division of Consumer Protection (division) and the attorney general;
  - a mechanism for the division to investigate alleged violations; and
  - an enforcement and penalty mechanism for the attorney general if the division



28 refers a violation to the attorney general;

29       ▶ creates a restricted account to deposit penalties and provides for the distributions  
30 from the account; and

31       ▶ provides for severability if a provision is found to be invalid.

32 **Money Appropriated in this Bill:**

33       None

34 **Other Special Clauses:**

35       None

36 **Utah Code Sections Affected:**

37 ENACTS:

38       **13-58-101**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

39       **13-58-102**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

40       **13-58-201**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

41       **13-58-202**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

42       **13-58-203**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

43       **13-58-204**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

44       **13-58-205**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

45       **13-58-301**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

46       **13-58-302**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

47       **13-58-303**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

48       **13-58-304**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

49       **13-58-401**, Utah Code Annotated 1953



51 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

52       Section 1. Section **13-58-101** is enacted to read:

53                   **CHAPTER 58. FREEDOM FROM BIASED MODERATION ACT**

54                                   **Part 1. General Provisions**

55                   **13-58-101. Title.**

56                   This chapter is known as the "Freedom from Biased Moderation Act."

57       Section 2. Section **13-58-102** is enacted to read:

58                   **13-58-102. Definitions.**

59 In this chapter:

60 (1) "Account holder" means a Utah resident who has or opens an account to use a  
61 social media corporation's platform.

62 (2) "Director" means the director of the division.

63 (3) "Division" means the Division of Consumer Protection in the Department of  
64 Commerce established in Section [13-2-1](#).

65 (4) "Flag" means the act of a social media corporation singling out a post because of  
66 the post's content.

67 (5) (a) "Inequitable moderation practice" means a moderation practice that results in a  
68 social media corporation removing, suppressing, or flagging an account holder's post or  
69 account because of the content of the post.

70 (b) "Inequitable moderation practice" includes:

71 (i) an inconsistent application of a social media corporation's terms of use to justify a  
72 moderation practice; and

73 (ii) moderating content that does not violate a social media corporation's terms of use.

74 (6) (a) "Interactive computer service" means any information service, system, or access  
75 software provider that provides or enables computer access by multiple users to a computer  
76 server, including a service or system that:

77 (i) provides access to the Internet;

78 (ii) provides a platform; and

79 (iii) has at least 10,000,000 account holders or generates more than \$50,000,000 in  
80 total annual revenue worldwide.

81 (b) "Interactive computer service" includes:

82 (i) a web service;

83 (ii) a web system;

84 (iii) a website;

85 (iv) a web application; or

86 (v) a web portal.

87 (7) (a) "Moderation practice" means a method a social media corporation employs to  
88 regulate a post.

89 (b) "Moderation practice" includes:

- 90 (i) flagging a post;
- 91 (ii) removing a post;
- 92 (iii) suspending an account holder's account; or
- 93 (iv) revoking an account holder's access to a platform.

94 (8) "Platform" means an online forum that a social media corporation makes available  
 95 for an account holder to:

- 96 (a) upload posts;
- 97 (b) view the posts of other account holders; or
- 98 (c) interact with other account holders or users.

99 (9) "Post" means content that an account holder makes available on the account  
 100 holder's account for other account holders or users to view.

101 (10) "Social media corporation" means any domestic corporation or foreign corporation  
 102 that is an interactive computer service.

103 (11) "Terms of use" means the terms to which an account holder must agree before an  
 104 account holder can open or continue to use an account on a platform.

105 (12) (a) "User" means an individual who has access to view the post of an account  
 106 holder.

107 (b) "User" includes an account holder.

108 (13) (a) "Utah resident" means a person who lives or operates in Utah and:

- 109 (i) if the person is an individual, has a primary residence in Utah; or
- 110 (ii) if the person is a business, has a principal place of business in Utah.

111 (b) "Utah resident" does not include a person who has a primary residence or principal  
 112 place of business in another state.

113 (14) "Violation" means a social media corporation's use of a moderation practice  
 114 against an account holder that does not comply with the social media corporation's terms of  
 115 use.

116 Section 3. Section **13-58-201** is enacted to read:

**Part 2. Transparency**

**13-58-201. Communication of moderation practices.**

119 (1) Beginning on July 1, 2021, and once every year following July 1, 2021, a social  
 120 media corporation shall clearly communicate to account holders the social media corporation's

121 moderation practices before the account holder continues to engage with the social media  
122 corporation's platform.

123 (2) A social media corporation shall ensure that the corporation's communication of  
124 moderation practices:

125 (a) provides a complete list of potential moderation practices to all account holders;

126 (b) informs an account holder about the social media corporation's terms of use  
127 regarding content that the social media corporation allows on the platform;

128 (c) explains the steps the social media corporation takes to ensure a post or account  
129 complies with the social media corporation's terms of use;

130 (d) explains the methods users can use to notify the social media corporation of content  
131 that may violate the terms of use; and

132 (e) includes information about the appeals process described in Section [13-58-204](#) and  
133 the independent review board described in Section [13-58-205](#).

134 Section 4. Section **13-58-202** is enacted to read:

135 **13-58-202. Prohibited moderation practices.**

136 A social media corporation may not:

137 (1) employ inequitable moderation practices; or

138 (2) communicate the information described in Section [13-58-201](#) in a method that  
139 includes any information not specifically related to the social media corporation's moderation  
140 practices.

141 Section 5. Section **13-58-203** is enacted to read:

142 **13-58-203. Notice requirement.**

143 (1) A social media corporation shall provide written notice to an account holder no  
144 more than 24 hours after moderating the account holder's post or account.

145 (2) The notice described in Subsection (1) shall include:

146 (a) a description of the post or account moderated;

147 (b) a description of the method the social media corporation used to moderate the post  
148 or account;

149 (c) a citation to the terms of use that the moderated post or account violated;

150 (d) information about the independent review board described in Section [13-58-204](#);

151 (e) information about the appeal process; and

- 152 (f) an appeal form.
- 153 (3) The account holder shall have 30 days to submit an appeal form.
- 154 (4) The social media corporation shall make the appeal form:
- 155 (a) simple to submit;
- 156 (b) contain an option for the account holder to submit up to five examples of similar
- 157 content that the social media corporation has not moderated; and
- 158 (c) contain an option for the account holder to explain why the post or account should
- 159 not have been moderated.

160 Section 6. Section **13-58-204** is enacted to read:

161 **13-58-204. Appeal process.**

- 162 (1) A moderator who was not involved in the original moderation decision shall review
- 163 each appeal form.
- 164 (2) The moderator shall provide to the account holder, in writing:
- 165 (a) an explanation of whether the post or account violates the social media
- 166 corporation's terms of use;
- 167 (b) an explanation of why the social media corporation:
- 168 (i) treated the examples the account holder provided on the appeal form differently
- 169 than the social media corporation treated the account holder's post or account; or
- 170 (ii) will moderate the examples the account holder provided; and
- 171 (c) a conclusion stating whether:
- 172 (i) the social media corporation engaged in an inequitable moderation practice in
- 173 moderating the post or account;
- 174 (ii) there is a possibility that the social media corporation engaged in an inequitable
- 175 moderation practice in moderating the post or account; or
- 176 (iii) the social media corporation acted properly in moderating the post or account.
- 177 (3) The moderator shall provide the written response no more than 30 days after the
- 178 day on which the social media corporation receives the appeal form.
- 179 (4) No more than 24 hours after the moderator concludes the social media corporation
- 180 engaged in an inequitable moderation practice in moderating the post or account, the social
- 181 media corporation shall reinstate the moderated post or account in the post or account's original
- 182 form.

183 (5) If the moderator concludes that there is a possibility that the social media  
184 corporation engaged in an inequitable moderation practice in moderating the post or account,  
185 the moderator shall refer the instance of moderation to the independent review board described  
186 in Section 13-58-205.

187 Section 7. Section **13-58-205** is enacted to read:

188 **13-58-205. Independent review board.**

189 (1) A social media corporation shall engage the services of an independent review  
190 board to review the social media corporation's content moderation decisions.

191 (2) A moderator conducting the appeal process described in Section 13-58-204 shall  
192 refer an instance of moderation to the independent review board if, during the appeal process,  
193 the moderator concludes that there is a possibility that the social media corporation engaged in  
194 an inequitable moderation practice in moderating the content.

195 (3) (a) The independent review board shall consist of at least 11 members who  
196 represent a diverse cross-section of political, religious, racial, generational, and social  
197 perspectives.

198 (b) The social media corporation shall provide on the social media corporation's  
199 platform biographies of all of the members of the independent review board.

200 (4) When conducting a review of an instance of moderation, the independent review  
201 board shall determine whether a social media corporation engaged in an inequitable moderation  
202 practice in moderating the post or account.

203 (5) The independent review board shall notify the social media corporation of the need  
204 to reverse an instance of moderation if the independent review board concludes by a simple  
205 majority that it is more likely than not that the social media corporation engaged in an  
206 inequitable moderation practice in moderating the post or account.

207 (6) The independent review board shall make a determination within 30 days after the  
208 day on which the independent review board receives a referral to review an instance of  
209 moderation.

210 (7) No more than 24 hours after the independent review board determines the social  
211 media corporation engaged in an inequitable moderation practice in moderating the post or  
212 account, the social media corporation shall reinstate the moderated post or account in the post  
213 or account's original form.

214 Section 8. Section **13-58-301** is enacted to read:

215 **Part 3. Enforcement**

216 **13-58-301. Investigative powers of the division.**

217 (1) The division shall establish and administer a system to receive consumer  
218 complaints regarding whether a social media corporation has committed a violation.

219 (2) (a) The division may investigate a consumer complaint to determine whether the  
220 social media corporation has committed a violation.

221 (b) If the results of the division's investigation give the director reasonable cause to  
222 believe that substantial evidence exists that a social media corporation identified in a consumer  
223 complaint has committed a violation, the director shall refer the matter to the attorney general.

224 (c) Upon request, the division shall provide consultation and assistance to the attorney  
225 general in enforcing this chapter.

226 Section 9. Section **13-58-302** is enacted to read:

227 **13-58-302. Enforcement powers of the attorney general.**

228 (1) Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, the attorney general has the exclusive  
229 authority to enforce this chapter.

230 (2) Nothing in this chapter creates a private right of action.

231 (3) Upon referral from the division, the attorney general may initiate an enforcement  
232 action against a social media corporation that commits a violation.

233 (4) (a) At least 30 days before the day on which the attorney general initiates an  
234 enforcement action against a social media corporation, the attorney general shall provide the  
235 social media corporation:

236 (i) written notice identifying each alleged violation; and

237 (ii) an explanation of the basis for each allegation.

238 (b) The attorney general may not initiate an action if the social media corporation:

239 (i) cures the noticed violation within 30 days after the day on which the social media  
240 corporation receives the written notice described in Subsection (4)(a); and

241 (ii) provides the attorney general an express written statement that:

242 (A) the social media corporation cured the violation; and

243 (B) no further violation will occur.

244 (c) The attorney general may initiate a civil action against a social media corporation



245 that:

246 (i) fails to cure a violation after receiving the notice described in Subsection (4)(a); or

247 (ii) after curing a noticed violation and providing a written statement in accordance

248 with Subsection (4)(b), commits another violation.

249 (d) In an action described in Subsection (4)(c), the attorney general may recover:

250 (i) actual damages to the consumer; and

251 (ii) for each violation, a civil penalty not to exceed \$1,000 per consumer affected by

252 the violation.

253 (5) The attorney general shall bring an action under this chapter in:

254 (a) the district court located in Salt Lake City; or

255 (b) the district court for the district in which resides a consumer who is affected by the

256 violation.

257 (6) All civil penalties received from an action under this chapter shall be deposited into

258 the Protecting Internet Speech Restricted Account established in Section [13-58-303](#).

259 Section 10. Section **13-58-303** is enacted to read:

260 **13-58-303. Protecting Internet Speech Restricted Account.**

261 (1) There is created within the General Fund a restricted account known as the

262 "Protecting Internet Speech Restricted Account."

263 (2) The account shall be funded by money received through civil enforcement actions

264 under this chapter.

265 (3) Upon appropriation, the division or the attorney general may use money deposited

266 into the account for:

267 (a) investigation and administrative costs incurred by the division in investigating

268 consumer complaints alleging violations of this chapter;

269 (b) recovery of costs and attorney fees accrued by the attorney general in enforcing this

270 chapter; and

271 (c) providing consumer and business education regarding:

272 (i) consumer rights under this chapter; and

273 (ii) compliance with the provisions of this chapter for social media corporations.

274 (4) If the balance of the account exceeds \$1,000,000 at the close of any fiscal year, the

275 Division of Finance shall transfer the amount that exceeds \$1,000,000 into the General Fund.

276 Section 11. Section **13-58-304** is enacted to read:

277 **13-58-304. Attorney general report.**

278 (1) The attorney general and the division shall compile a report:

279 (a) evaluating the liability and enforcement provisions of this chapter, including:

280 (i) the effectiveness of the attorney general's and the division's efforts to enforce this  
281 chapter; and

282 (ii) any recommendations for changes to this chapter; and

283 (b) summarizing the moderation practices protected and not protected by this chapter,  
284 including a list of alleged violations the attorney general and the division have received.

285 (2) The attorney general and the division may update the report as new information  
286 becomes available.

287 (3) The attorney general and the division shall submit the report to the Business and  
288 Labor Interim Committee before July 1, 2023.

289 Section 12. Section **13-58-401** is enacted to read:

290 **Part 4. Severability**

291 **13-58-401. Severability.**

292 If any provision of this chapter or the application of any provision to any person is held  
293 invalid by a final decision of a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this chapter  
294 shall be given effect without the invalid provision or application.