The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMUNICATIONS DECENCY ACT

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, for almost 25 years, the internet has grown and thrived under the light-touch regulatory framework established by the Communications Decency Act. I hope we can continue that. I think some changes need to be made.

Passed in 1996, the law that the Communications Decency Act is a part of helped create the internet. Section 230 of that law gives broad liability protections to interactive computer services, such as Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms. This provision protects online platforms from being held liable for content posted by their users.

This is a unique protection for online platforms, and not everyone in our country enjoys those protections. For example, newspapers do not enjoy this important protection. But we have done this for internet platforms.

At the same time, section 230 of the Communications Decency Act allows online platforms to censor content that they—the platforms—consider obscene, lewd, harassing, along with several other categories, including the term "otherwise objectionable."

I am concerned that this term, "otherwise objectionable," is too broad and ends up protecting online platforms when they remove content that they simply disagree with or dislike or find distasteful personally.

I fear section 230 has enabled big tech companies to censor conservative views and voices, and I am joined by a lot of Americans in that view. As such, this provision has become a loophole for censoring free speech, and it risks negating the values at the very heart of our First Amendment.

In the last few years, reports of online censorship of conservative viewpoints have grown more frequent. In early 2018, for example, an undercover report exposed Twitter for systematically "shadow banning" conservative profiles—meaning users were blocked from the platform without being notified.

More recently, Google threatened to demonetize a conservative news site, The Federalist, for not removing offensive content in their comment section. Based upon information I received, the comments may indeed have been derogatory and unacceptable. But what is noteworthy is that Google's threat toward the Federalist was hyperselective and a bit hypocritical. Google held the Federalist accountable for comments made by the Federalist readers, but Google does not want to be held responsible for the posts or comments by users on Google's platforms, including YouTube—a double standard imposed by Google itself. This selective scrutiny reveals what most Americans already believe: that tech companies are politically biased.

According to a 2018 Pew study, 7 out of 10 Americans believed social media

companies censor political viewpoints that they find objectionable. That was 2 years ago. It has only worsened in the 2 years since then.

These concerns come at a time when tech companies wield unprecedented power within our economy and our culture at large, and no one can deny that. A bipartisan chorus of committee members from the other body pointed this out just last week. More and more of our daily business is taking place online, and that trend is only accelerating during the current pandemic.

As we near the 2020 election, Americans have serious concerns about whether online platforms will treat campaigns on both sides of the aisle fairly and equally. Those concerns are warranted. I have those concerns. Americans are right to be worried about interference by politically homogenous tech firms that hold unprecedented sway over our Nation's political discourse.

After 24 years, it is time for Congress to revisit section 230 of the Communications Decency Act and start with refining—perhaps narrowing—the scope of what counts as otherwise objectionable content subject to censors. There may be other reforms that would be better, but I think it is time for Congress and the committee that I chair to revisit this section of the law.

Last week, the Commerce Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, Innovation, and the Internet convened a hearing to consider exactly this issue, and it was a very good hearing. As chairman of the Commerce Committee, I intend to pursue this matter thoroughly and evaluate what changes are needed to section 230. Congress needs to ensure that the internet remains a forum for a "true diversity of political discourse" that promotes competition and innovation.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CHINA

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, last week, journalists at ESPN published the results of a bombshell investigation into human rights violations at NBA training academies in China.

When you think about a basketball camp, you probably think of shooting drills or running sprints, but these camps look much different. The investigation focused on training camps located in Xinjiang. This particular region in western China has achieved a certain level of notoriety in recent months for the horrific political violence its government officials inflict on the Uighur Muslim minority. So it is no surprise that the stories told by trainers, coaches, and other NBA employees who helped to run these camps

employ disturbing and familiar imagery.

According to the ESPN investigation, one former league employee compared the atmosphere at the Xinjiang camp to "World War II Germany."

An American coach, who worked at a similar facility, described it as a "sweat camp for athletes."

Now, according to the investigation, almost immediately after the NBA launched this program back in 2016, multiple coaches who were staffing the camps reported to high-ranking organization officials that they had witnessed Chinese coaches beating and berating student athletes. Bear in mind that these reports were made in 2016. They also reported that the Chinese Communist Party officials who were in charge of the camp were denying students an education.

In coming to this elite camp, they were to receive both an education and elevated sports training, but the reports, going back to 2016, said the children were being abused, beaten, berated, and denied the education. So why then did the NBA maintain these programs?

Money.

Communist China plays host to an estimated $4 billion NBA market. They say that China is basketball-obsessed, and NBA execs have used every avenue they can to take advantage of that, and they jealously protect these relationships.

Last October, when Houston Rockets' General Manager Daryl Morey tweeted in support of the Hong Kong Freedom Fighters, multiple league all-stars, stakeholders, and well-connected employees lashed out in a panic—terrified of retaliation from Beijing.

Team owner and Alibaba co-founder Joe Tsai not only sided with the Chinese Communist Party as it retaliated against the entire league, but he characterized the Hong Kong protesters as leading a separatist movement.

Their over-the-top reactions are proof enough of how fragile the NBA's relationship with China actually is and who is really in control of this relationship. The control is not with the NBA.

In June, I sent a letter to the NBA, expressing my concerns about the training camps in Xinjiang and the league's entanglement with the Chinese Communist Party. In their response, they announced that they had closed their facilities in the region and that they had severed their ties to any programs there.

The problem is that the ESPN report I referenced previously disputes that assertion. I am reaching out for clarification on that matter, but in their response, I hope NBA officials express clarity regarding all—each and every one—of their business relationships with China because the NBA and other organizations that maintain close ties to the Chinese Communist Party believe that they are merely taking advantage of a growing consumer market—or that is what they say. To them,