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Title 47 - TELECOMMUNICATIONS

CHAPTER 5 - WIRE OR RADIO COMMUNICATION

SUBCHAPTER II - COMMON CARRIERS

Part I - Common Carrier Regulation

Sec. 230 - Protection for private blocking and screening of offensive material

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§230. Protection for private blocking and screening of offensive material

(a) Findings

The Congress finds the following:

(1) The rapidly developing array of Internet and other interactive computer services available to individual Americans represent an extraordinary advance in the availability of educational and informational resources to our citizens.

(2) These services offer users a great degree of control over the information that they receive, as well as the potential for even greater control in the future as technology develops.

(3) The Internet and other interactive computer services offer a forum for a true diversity of political discourse, unique opportunities for cultural development, and myriad avenues for intellectual activity.

(4) The Internet and other interactive computer services have flourished, to the benefit of all Americans, with a minimum of government regulation.

(5) Increasingly Americans are relying on interactive media for a variety of political, educational, cultural, and entertainment services.

(b) Policy

It is the policy of the United States—

(1) to promote the continued development of the Internet and other interactive computer services and other interactive media;

(2) to preserve the vibrant and competitive free market that presently exists for the Internet and other interactive computer services, unfettered by Federal or State regulation;

(3) to encourage the development of technologies which maximize user control over what information is received by individuals, families, and schools who use the Internet and other interactive computer services;

(4) to remove disincentives for the development and utilization of blocking and filtering technologies that empower parents to restrict their children's access to objectionable or inappropriate online material; and

(5) to ensure vigorous enforcement of Federal criminal laws to deter and punish trafficking in obscenity, stalking, and harassment by means of computer.

(c) Protection for "Good Samaritan" blocking and screening of offensive material

(1) Treatment of publisher or speaker

No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider.

(2) Civil liability

No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be held liable on account of—

(A) any action voluntarily taken in good faith to restrict access to or availability of material that the provider or user considers to be obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy, excessively violent, harassing, or otherwise objectionable, whether or not such material is constitutionally protected; or

(B) any action taken to enable or make available to information content providers or others the technical means to restrict access to material described in paragraph (1).¹

(d) Obligations of interactive computer service

A provider of interactive computer service shall, at the time of entering an agreement with a customer for the provision of interactive computer service and in a manner deemed appropriate by the provider, notify such customer that parental control protections (such as computer hardware, software, or filtering services) are commercially available that may assist the customer in limiting access to material that is harmful to minors. Such notice shall identify, or provide the customer with access to information identifying, current providers of such protections.

(e) Effect on other laws

(1) No effect on criminal law

Nothing in this section shall be construed to impair the enforcement of section 223 or 231 of this title, chapter 71 (relating to obscenity) or 110 (relating to sexual exploitation of children) of title 18, or any other Federal criminal statute.

(2) No effect on intellectual property law

Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit or expand any law pertaining to intellectual property.

(3) State law

Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent any State from enforcing any State law that is consistent with this section. No cause of action may be brought and no liability may be imposed under any State or local law that is inconsistent with this section.

(4) No effect on communications privacy law

Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the application of the Electronic Communications Privacy Act of 1986 or any of the amendments made by such Act, or any similar State law.

(5) No effect on sex trafficking law

Nothing in this section (other than subsection (c)(2)(A)) shall be construed to impair or limit—

(A) any claim in a civil action brought under section 1595 of title 18, if the conduct underlying the claim constitutes a violation of section 1591 of that title;

(B) any charge in a criminal prosecution brought under State law if the conduct underlying the charge would constitute a violation of section 1591 of title 18; or

(C) any charge in a criminal prosecution brought under State law if the conduct underlying the charge would constitute a violation of section 2421A of title 18, and promotion or facilitation of prostitution is illegal in the jurisdiction where the defendant's promotion or facilitation of prostitution was targeted.

(f) Definitions

As used in this section:

(1) Internet

The term "Internet" means the international computer network of both Federal and non-Federal interoperable packet switched data networks.

(2) Interactive computer service

The term "interactive computer service" means any information service, system, or access software provider that provides or enables computer access by multiple users to a computer server, including specifically a service or system that provides access to the Internet and such systems operated or services offered by libraries or educational institutions.

(3) Information content provider

The term "information content provider" means any person or entity that is responsible, in whole or in part, for the creation or development of information provided through the Internet or

any other interactive computer service.

(4) Access software provider

The term "access software provider" means a provider of software (including client or server software), or enabling tools that do any one or more of the following:

- (A) filter, screen, allow, or disallow content;
- (B) pick, choose, analyze, or digest content; or
- (C) transmit, receive, display, forward, cache, search, subset, organize, reorganize, or translate content.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title II, §230, as added Pub. L. 104–104, title V, §509, Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 137; amended Pub. L. 105–277, div. C, title XIV, §1404(a), Oct. 21, 1998, 112 Stat. 2681–739; Pub. L. 115–164, §4(a), Apr. 11, 2018, 132 Stat. 1254.)

EDITORIAL NOTES

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Electronic Communications Privacy Act of 1986, referred to in subsec. (e)(4), is Pub. L. 99–508, Oct. 21, 1986, 100 Stat. 1848. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title of 1986 Amendment note set out under section 2510 of Title 18, Crimes and Criminal Procedure, and Tables.

CODIFICATION

Section 509 of Pub. L. 104–104, which directed amendment of title II of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 201 et seq.) by adding section 230 at end, was executed by adding the section at end of part I of title II of the Act to reflect the probable intent of Congress and amendments by sections 101(a), (b), and 151(a) of Pub. L. 104–104 designating §§201 to 229 as part I and adding parts II (§251 et seq.) and III (§271 et seq.) to title II of the Act.

AMENDMENTS

2018—Subsec. (e)(5). Pub. L. 115–164 added par. (5).

1998—Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 105–277, §1404(a)(3), added subsec. (d). Former subsec. (d) redesignated (e). Subsec. (d)(1). Pub. L. 105–277, §1404(a)(1), inserted "or 231" after "section 223".

Subsecs. (e), (f). Pub. L. 105–277, §1404(a)(2), redesignated subsecs. (d) and (e) as (e) and (f), respectively.

STATUTORY NOTES AND RELATED SUBSIDIARIES

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2018 AMENDMENT

Pub. L. 115–164, §4(b), Apr. 11, 2018, 132 Stat. 1254, provided that: "The amendments made by this section [amending this section] shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act [Apr. 11, 2018], and the amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply regardless of whether the conduct alleged occurred, or is alleged to have occurred, before, on, or after such date of enactment."

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1998 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 105–277 effective 30 days after Oct. 21, 1998, see section 1406 of Pub. L. 105–277, set out as a note under section 223 of this title.

SAVINGS

Pub. L. 115–164, §7, Apr. 11, 2018, 132 Stat. 1255, provided that: "Nothing in this Act [see Short Title of 2018 Amendment note set out under section 1 of Title 18, Crimes and Criminal Procedure] or the amendments made by this Act shall be construed to limit or preempt any civil action or criminal prosecution under Federal law or State law (including State statutory law and State common law) filed before or after the day before the date of enactment of this Act [Apr. 11, 2018] that was not limited or preempted by section 230 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 230), as such section was in effect on the day before the date of enactment of this Act."

SENSE OF CONGRESS

Pub. L. 115–164, §2, Apr. 11, 2018, 132 Stat. 1253, provided that: "It is the sense of Congress that—

"(1) section 230 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 230; commonly known as the 'Communications Decency Act of 1996') was never intended to provide legal protection to websites that unlawfully promote and facilitate prostitution and websites that facilitate traffickers in advertising the sale of unlawful sex acts with sex trafficking victims;

"(2) websites that promote and facilitate prostitution have been reckless in allowing the sale of sex trafficking victims and have done nothing to prevent the trafficking of children and victims of force, fraud, and coercion; and

"(3) clarification of such section is warranted to ensure that such section does not provide such protection to such websites."

EXECUTIVE DOCUMENTS

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 13925

Ex. Ord. No. 13925, May 28, 2020, 85 F.R. 34079, which related to moderation of content posted on social media platforms, was revoked by Ex. Ord. No. 14029, §1, May 14, 2021, 86 F.R. 27025.

¹ So in original. Probably should be "subparagraph (A)."