



**Social & Online Media Virtual Learning**

# **HS/Introduction to Social and Online Media**

**April 17, 2020**



Lesson: [Social Media & The Government (4/17/20)]

**Objective/Learning Target:**

**Understand why the government might decide to regulate social media. Analyze various different possibilities for regulating social media. Decide whether or not government regulation of social media is warranted.**

# Bell Ringer

- Was there a point during our lessons on Media Literacy that you thought “why doesn’t the government do something to stop this?” And do you believe the government SHOULD step in and try to stop some of the issues with social media even beyond disinformation and misinformation?



# Social Media

*A dystopian future?*



# US Govt. vs Social Media

*Regulating the tech giants*

# Facebook meets with Congress

- Zuckerberg was called in front of Congress last April to answer questions about Facebook's involvement in the Cambridge Analytica data scandal that helped fuel research that Trump's team used during the election.
- The senators that grilled him asked probing questions that revealed the government's concern with Facebook was far greater than one scandal.

# The Senate's Concerns

- What right do US citizens have to privacy? And should they even be allowed to give up so much to Facebook?
- Lindsey Graham pushed Zuckerberg about whether or not it was a monopoly.
- They called out Facebook's user agreement and asked them to re-write it so that it is more informative to the user and less about covering them from possible lawsuits.

# Elizabeth Warren makes it a part of the next election cycle

Where you stand on big tech could be a big part of who you vote for in the next election.



# The Campaign to Stop Big Tech

- As the 2020 presidential race began to take shape, former Democratic candidate Elizabeth Warren pushed the issue to the forefront of the election.
- She believes the enormous market power of Facebook, Google, and Amazon is dangerous.
- Warren believes these companies represent a monopoly and are stifling the growth of small business and leading to a lack of innovation.
- But unlike most people who make this argument...Warren has a plan.

# Warren's Plan

- She wants to designate any company that makes over \$25 billion yearly and provides connectivity a “platform utility”
- Essentially a utility designation would mean that they would fall under the jurisdiction of the government and meet standards like fair and non-discriminatory use of its users and would be restricted from sharing user data with third-parties.
- State attorney generals and private parties could sue platforms that violate these standards.

# Warren's Plan (continued)

- The government could fine a company 5% of their annual revenue for violating restrictions.
- The legislation would also force the companies to break apart as not to own participants in their platform. For example Google's ad exchange and Google search would have to be different platforms with different owners.

# Rolling Back Mergers

- This is where Warren's plan gets intense. She wants to assign regulators to roll back acquisitions she deems anti-competitive.
- For Facebook this would mean giving up WhatsApp and Instagram.
- Warren believes this will improve the ability of small businesses to compete and will help content providers like newspapers and magazines make money and not just have profits gained by platforms like Facebook.

Think about Warren's plans.  
Do you like them? Can you  
see possible problems? Do  
you believe they are a net  
positive or negative?

# Big Tech's Issues With the Plan

- It offers broad solutions to narrow problems. Tech can't be regulated by one-size fits all legislation. Facebook's domination of the digital ad market is different than Amazon low-balling other e-commerce and Apple making their own products more valuable by creating tough terms for non-Apple products on their App Store. They all could hurt competition but they do it in different ways and broad legislation could lead to unintended consequences.

# Possible Unintended Consequences

- The regulation that prevents Amazon competing with third-party sellers on its own platform could hurt Chromebook laptop sales or make iPhone users lose access to their iTunes library.
- These consequences can be seen as hurting consumers almost as much as they help them.

# Not just Warren

- By mentioning it on such a big stage Warren has effectively made all possible presidential candidates weigh in with their opinions.
- This means the election could go a long ways towards determining how social media looks in the future.
- Candidates have already started weighing in and most of them are agreeing that social media needs regulation but they want to do it in different ways or maybe less extreme than Warren.



# The Slippery Slope

- With any form of regulation...the question is often less about the specific legislation being enacted and more about what this could mean about the future.
- Where does the regulation stop? If the government operates them like utilities how long before they make more regulations as it suits the controlling party politically?
- Is there a point where they step in and take control like they do with the power grid?

Here's a story about how  
other countries regulate social  
media.

# Assignment

1. Do you believe the government should break up Facebook? Why or why not?
2. If Warren's plan went through and you could no longer get Apple products on the iPhone or buy Amazon products on Amazon how would it affect you?
3. What is your favorite idea that another country has done in terms of social media regulation? Explain why.
4. If the government took a dystopian approach and decided to start running social media itself what problems would this create?