



HF 4400 / SF 4696 Undermines First Amendment Protections Held by All Minnesotans

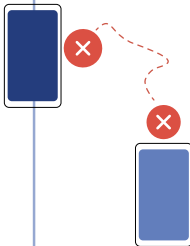
A new Minnesota proposal has the state poised to follow Texas and Florida in violating centuries of First Amendment protections against government compelling or blocking speech. These bills (HF 4400/SF 4696) put Minnesotans at risk of more government control over online speech. Many people forget that the First Amendment not only safeguards against governmental intrusion on speech by private individuals or companies – it also protects them from being compelled to speak or publish content.

The dangers associated with HF 4400/SF 4696 include:



Daily Engagement Limits

The bills would restrict social media access through daily engagement limits on new or “highly active” account holders, potentially cutting off isolated individuals who rely on these platforms as their crucial connection to the outside world. This could threaten Minnesotans’ ability to access publicly available information online, potentially impeding their right to freely obtain and share knowledge. Information ranging from local safety alerts to updates about natural disasters could be blocked if someone exceeded their time limit.



Restricting User Interactions

The legislation poses additional issues through a provision to prohibit contact from an account holder not already within a user’s existing network – unless the user initiates and welcomes the contact. HF 4400/SF 4696 raises questions about how a user could “initiate” and “welcome” contact if the default settings mandated under the bill would prohibit most interactions, including messages and requests from beyond a user’s existing network.



First Amendment Violations

The First Amendment is designed to allow people to communicate through a marketplace of ideas, and to prevent government intervention regarding what ideas people can see. Instead of government-mandated or forced speech, our organization encourages robust online discourse and lets users themselves choose from different content policies based on what fits their needs. This will enable some sites to be stronger in removing dangerous content, such as cyberbullying, terrorism, or animal cruelty, while others will tend to allow all lawful speech. To have the government insist on uniformity, at its discretion, poses a threat to the freedoms enjoyed by all Minnesotans.

This legislation creates more dangers to democracy than the issues it claims to solve for Minnesotans. Reject HF 4400/SF 4696.