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Social Media and the First Amendment

I appreciate freedom of speech being a human right. Freedom of speech is a privilege that should never be taken for granted, as many people in other countries do not get to exercise this right without consequences. Due to this privilege, Americans, especially those with popular social media accounts, have the responsibility to exercise this right without spewing hate and spreading misinformation. While social media is a benefit to today's society, there could be significant negative effects that arise due to misinformation, false news, and increased anxiety. There should be consequences for spreading hateful comments that devalue groups of people and for willfully posting untruths.

TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube are apps that I constantly check for daily entertainment and messaging. While social media allows me to stay up to date with friends and family all over the country, I also must be careful with how I assess information online. Using social media, I have learned about various topics to improve myself, but I also tend to waste time when I could be more productive. Moreover, since social media is a source of news for millions in today's culture, there is always the danger of receiving false information. To prevent misinformation from spreading, social media companies should use their resources and increased media power to objectively review information that is posted, but they should be careful to limit their own biases and prevent unjust censorship.

Social media platforms should not have to regulate every post from all users. To an extent, the users of social media should take personal responsibility for believing misinformation on the internet. It would be more effective for social media companies to monitor specific accounts to ensure that large masses do not believe lies or think it is okay to take actions inspired by hate. Accounts with 10,000+ followers should follow stricter guidelines due to their influence on a larger number of people. Posting derogatory comments and images about historically oppressed groups of people on social media can be a reason for someone mentally unstable to commit a hate crime. When the rules are violated, the consequences should be progressive to discourage rule breaking. A reasonable progression would be a warning, day suspension, week suspension, month suspension and removal from the platform only for infractions that are proved to be illegal in court.

Other than derogatory comments and impactful lies, people should be free to speak how they wish. Our right to express our opinions is an essential part of the first amendment within our democratic society. The American society cannot thrive when individuals use their freedom of speech to negatively hinder other people's rights. Words can quickly escalate to actions, and with social media, one influential person's angry "tweet" can turn into an angry mob. Social media improves society and provides an easy way to communicate and stay informed, but to maintain civil society, misinformation from influential accounts should be scrutinized.