



CBCF EXECUTIVE ORDER TRACKER

Restoring Freedom of Speech and Ending Federal Censorship

Executive Order #14149

Date Issued: January 20, 2025

Topic: Civil Rights, Mental Health, Technology

WHAT DOES THIS EXECUTIVE ORDER DO?

- This order restricts the federal government from engaging in any conduct that would “unconstitutionally abridge the free speech of any American Citizen.”
- The order calls for ending censorship of protected speech.
- The order directs the Attorney General and heads of departments and agencies to investigate the activities of the Federal Government over the last four years “that are inconsistent with the purposes and policies of the order.” They are instructed to prepare a report with recommendations for remedial actions based on the findings.



HOW WILL THIS EXECUTIVE ORDER BE ENFORCED?

- This order rolls back previous commitments and attempts at managing hate speech, “misinformation,” and “disinformation” on online platforms, articulating an interest in “securing the right of the American people to engage in constitutionally protected speech.”
- To enforce the order, the White House is directing the Justice Department to recommend “remedial action.” It is still unclear what this will look like.
- Additionally, the order prohibits the use of taxpayer resources toward censorship, which could potentially have implications for researchers who have been targeted by conservative groups for tracking and working to mitigate misinformation online.
- While the order is vague in its description of consequences for those in breach, it fulfills the promise President Trump made in a [video](#) just after the election to end censorship as soon as he is in office. In the video, he threatens to fire federal employees who have “engaged in domestic censorship, whether directly or indirectly.”





HOW DOES THIS IMPACT BLACK COMMUNITIES?

- This order comes after many of the largest social media companies have already started limiting and/or removing fact checking technologies from their platforms through the 2024 election. The banning of content moderation policies impacts Black communities in several ways including public health outcomes and political engagement.
- **Health Outcomes:** Public Health misinformation and disinformation online are rampant as evidenced throughout the COVID pandemic. [Research](#) shows Black Americans commonly believed in COVID-19 vaccine misinformation which contributed to lower rates of vaccination in Black American populations through exacerbating medical mistrust. In addition to the perils of public health misinformation, Black Americans are more susceptible to online racial discrimination and other forms of online victimization, which is linked to [negative mental health outcomes](#). This order is likely to contribute to a rise in exposure to discriminatory content and mis/disinformation for Black Americans.
- **Political Engagement:** Political mis/disinformation is consistently evolving and advancing with real world implications for Black American voters as evidenced in the last three presidential election cycles. In 2024, there were [reports of](#) rampant spread of misinformation through political ads and “deepfakes” of public officials and candidates designed to mislead Black voters. Without moderation, Black voters may continue to be targeted with false information about voting logistics and political candidates’ policies in the future.



HOW ARE CBC MEMBERS RESPONDING?

- The Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) has historically demonstrated a commitment to protecting the American people from hate speech and misinformation online. Notably, in March 2024, **Reps. Terri Sewell and Shontel Brown** led a [letter](#) to the Departments of Justice, Homeland Security, and Election Assistance expressing concerns about the use of generative AI to target Black and Brown voters with misinformation in the 2024 election cycle.
- During the 2024 election season, CBC Member **Rep. Shontel Brown**, backed by the NAACP and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights under Law, introduced the Securing Elections from AI Deception Act as a direct response to the increased political mis/disinformation. This legislation would prohibit the use of AI to "deprive or defraud individuals of their right to vote and require disclaimers on AI generated content."
- In a [press release](#) on the matter, **Rep. Brown** stated, "I am especially concerned that deepfake images, audio, and video will be used to target Black and minority voters whose voting rights have historically and consistently been under threat. Combining 21st century technology with old-fashioned voter suppression and misinformation is a dangerous combination."