

Social media forced to balance free speech vs. accuracy, decency

NEW YORK (AP) — Who knew connecting the world could get so complicated? Perhaps some of technology's brightest minds should have seen that coming.

Social media bans of conspiracy theorist Alex Jones have thrust Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and others into a role they never wanted — as gatekeepers of discourse on their platforms, deciding what should and shouldn't be allowed. Jones, a right-wing provocateur, suddenly found himself banned from most major social platforms, after years in which he was free to use them to spew a variety of false claims.

Twitter, which one of its executives once called the "free speech party," remains a lonely holdout on Jones. The resulting backlash suggests that no matter what the tech companies do, "there is no way they can please everyone," as Scott Shackelford, a business law and ethics professor at Indiana University, observed.

Facebook's Mark

Zuckerberg, Twitter's Jack Dorsey and crew, and Google's stewards of YouTube gave little thought to such consequences as they built their empires with lofty goals to connect the world and open discourse. At the time, they were the rebels aiming to bypass the stodgy old gatekeepers — newspaper editors, TV programmers and other establishment types — and let people say whatever they wanted.

"If you go back a decade or so, the whole idea of speech on social media was seen as highly positive light," said Tim Cigelske, who teaches social media at Marquette University in Wisconsin.

The dark side of untrammelled discourse, the thinking went, would sort itself out as online communities moderated themselves, aided by fast-evolving computer algorithms and, eventually, artificial intelligence.

That all got dicier once the election of President Donald Trump focused new attention on fake news and organized mis-

information social media campaigns — not to mention the fact some of the people grabbing social-media megaphones were wild conspiracy theorists, white nationalists who organize violent rallies, and men who threaten women with rape and murder.

While the platforms may not have anticipated the influx of hate speech and meddling from foreign powers like Russia, North Korea and China, many observers say they should have acted more quickly once they found it.

Facebook, Twitter, Google, Reddit and others face these questions millions of times a day, as human moderators and algorithms decide which posts, which people, which photos or videos to allow, to kick off or simply make less visible and harder to find. If they allow too much harmful content, they risk losing users and advertisers. If they go too far and remove too much, they face charges of censorship and ideological bias.



The crowd wasn't napping when Sleep Nation took the stage Saturday night led by Bran Merrett, left, and Seth Bouldin.

Crowd didn't snooze during Sleep Nation's performance

BY ATLANTA NORTHCUIT
Southern Standard Staff
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

The power of music has been uniting the community with Reggae at Smooth Rapids in early August and Groovin' by the River this past Saturday.

Sleep Nation brought its brand of what lead singer Bran Merritt calls "out of control rock n' roll" to the local music venue. The band offered high-flying jumps and kicks along with an electrifying stage presence and upbeat jams.

A highlight was the Sleep Nation cover of the Cranberries hit "Zombie." Sleep Nation credits the current political environment as one of its inspirations behind writing. The set ended with an impressive off-stage pounding of a glowing floor tom drum by Merritt and a synthesized keyboard being played to perfection.

The interaction with the audience and showmanship of Sleep Nation is a sight for sore eyes in an industry where so many top performers often play their sets and leave just to get the money and run. Sleep Nation has currently been working on a new music video for its new single "American Way" that will be released Sept. 7.

Nashville band Bellsenberg came back to the place they started, Smooth Rapids, to finish out the night with their groovy tunes. Influenced by the Beatles and Bob Dylan, the group had the crowd dancing and smiling with feel-good songs with a country/folk twist.

Band founders David Isenberg and Starr Belle say their favorite songs are "Grapes" and "The Big Bad Wolf" because they get the crowd pumped up



Atlanta Northcutt photos
David Isenberg performs Saturday night with his band, Bellsenberg.

and filled with energy. They hope to be back next year and continue to perform together.

Justin Neely, owner of Find Your Groove and a fellow musician, organized Groovin' by the River. He is a strong believer in the future of the local music community and what we can create if we work together.

"Everybody has that rock n' roll spirit, that passion," says Justin. "And when you have an entire town of people who support you and back you up and love you, that's a powerful thing."

The last installment of the summer Groovin' by the River series is Sept. 1. Beer and food vendors will be on site. Tickets are \$10.

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Registration for November elections ends tomorrow

BY JAMES CLARK
Editor for the Southern Standard
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

Voters have one more chance to go to the polls in 2018 as city, state and federal elections are on the ballot in November.

Residents in McMinnville and Morrison looking to run for office have until this Thursday, Aug. 16, at noon to get on the ballot. It takes signatures of 25 registered voters from the district you wish to serve to get on the ballot.

In McMinnville, three aldermen seats currently held by Everett Brock, Steve Harvey and Ryle Chastain will be up for grabs Nov. 6.

All three have already qualified. Former city administrator David Rutherford has also qualified, along with former county commissioner David Rhea.

Three others have

picked up qualifying papers, but not returned them.

They are Allen Hitchcock, David Hill and Jeff McKinnon.

The position of McMinnville mayor will not be on the ballot, even though the seat is expected to be open in the coming weeks.

Current Mayor Jimmy Haley has been elected to serve as county executive in a term set to begin Sept. 1.

He can't begin serving as county executive until he resigns as McMinnville mayor, per Tennessee code.

Haley's decision not to resign in time to get the seat on the ballot means current Vice Mayor Ben Newman will be appointed as mayor and serve two years in that capacity until the next election in 2020.

There will be a local mayor elected in 2018, but it will be in Morrison. Current Mayor Sue Anderson, fresh off an election to School Board, will be trying for her second political victory in three months when she seeks re-election.

Anderson has already picked up and returned

her qualifying papers for mayor.

Travis Battles is her only potential opposition thus far.

He has picked up papers but not returned them.

There are two Morrison alderman seats available for full, four-year terms. Thus far, Joe H. Hefner Jr. is the only person to pick up papers and return them. Donald Miller, a former alderman, has picked up papers but not returned them.

There is also a vacant two-year term for Morrison alderman. Four people have picked up papers for that seat — Lajuana Baker, Travis Battles, Roger D. Smith and Sue Jones. Smith and Jones have qualified.

In addition to city races, voters will be electing a new governor in November as Bill Lee faces Karl Dean.

There will be a new U.S. senator too as Phil Bredesen faces Marsha Blackburn.

Other races on the ballot are 4th District U.S. House, 43rd District Tennessee House, and 47th District Tennessee House.

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