

Opinion: Misinformation Isn't Just on Facebook and Twitter | The New York Times

By Nicholas A. Ashford

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The plague of misinformation — false rumors about the legitimacy of the 2020 presidential election, the ineffectiveness of face masks and the safety of 5G, to name a few examples — is usually blamed on social media. But false and damaging information isn't just available online. It's also abundant in broadcast media, and as politicians debate whether or how to regulate technology companies, they should also consider creating systems to address the dangers implicit in allowing and enabling the spread of misinformation, wherever it's published.

The Constitution safeguards the freedom of speech from direct government interference, but lawmakers also recognize the need for thoughtful intervention. Politicians have been concerned about the power of online platforms for years. Last week, leaders of Google, Facebook and Twitter were again asked to answer questions from members of Congress about how their platforms handle false or harmful material. Both the House and the Senate are considering legislation that would revise Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, which currently exempts technology companies from being held responsible for the material they publish. Facebook has been advocating the law's reform. Technology companies are also facing congressional scrutiny for potential antitrust violations.

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