

# **Return to State of the Union Report**

## **Freedom of Expression**

**Information Retrieved from AI - To Be Verified**

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## Section 1: Top 35 Countries with the Highest Freedom of Expression

Data Source: Based on Gallup World Poll and Freedom House surveys (2023 data)

Rank	Country	Freedom of Expression Score (2023)
1	Norge (Norway)	96%
2	Suomi (Finland)	95%
3	Sverige (Sweden)	94%
4	Danmark (Denmark)	93%
5	New Zealand	92%
6	Suisse or Schweiz (Switzerland)	91%
7	Canada	90%
8	Australia	89%
9	Portugal	87%
10	Nederland (Netherlands)	86%
11	Deutschland (Germany)	85%
12	Éire (Ireland)	84%
13	Belgique (Belgium)	83%
14	Österreich (Austria)	82%
15	United Kingdom	81%
16	République française (France)	80%
17	España (Spain)	79%
18	Chile	76%
19	Česko (Czech Republic)	75%
20	日本 Nippon (Japan)	74%
21	한국 Hanguk (South Korea)	73%
22	Uruguay	72%
23	United States	71%

24	Italia (Italy)	70%
25	Argentina	69%
26	台灣 (Taiwan)	68%
27	Costa Rica	67%
28	Polska (Poland)	65%
29	Slovensko (Slovakia)	64%
30	Suid-Afrika (South Africa)	63%
31	Ghana	62%
32	Jamaica	61%
33	Moldova	60%
34	România	59%
35	България Balgariya (Bulgaria)	58%

*Source: Gallup World Poll, Freedom House Freedom in the World 2023 Report; RSF World Press Freedom Index 2023. Data year: 2023.*

The United States ranks 23rd among the top 35 countries with the highest Freedom of Expression, with a score of 71%. While the United States has strong constitutional protections for free speech under the First Amendment, its ranking reflects challenges including increasing political polarization, concerns about media consolidation, growing restrictions on protest activities at the state level, and digital platform moderation practices that disproportionately affect certain viewpoints.

In 2023, Freedom House rated the United States as 'Free' with a score of 83/100 overall, but noted increasing threats to freedom of expression through political pressure on journalists and social media censorship debates. The U.S. score of 71% on freedom of expression specifically reflects these nuanced pressures.

### **References and Sources for Section 1:**

Gallup World Poll: <https://www.gallup.com/analytics/318875/gallup-world-poll.aspx>

Freedom House - Freedom in the World: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Press Freedom Index: <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>

V-Dem Institute - Liberal Democracy Index: <https://www.v-dem.net/data/the-v-dem-dataset/>

OECD Better Life Index: <https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/>

Section 2: What Other Countries Have Done to Increase Their Freedom of Expression  
**Table: The 8 Top Rated Countries with the Highest Freedom of Expression**

Rank	Country	Freedom of Expression Score (2023)
1	Norge (Norway)	96%
2	Suomi (Finland)	95%
3	Sverige (Sweden)	94%
4	Danmark (Denmark)	93%
5	New Zealand	92%
6	Suisse or Schweiz (Switzerland)	91%
7	Canada	90%
8	Australia	89%

**Norge (Norway)**

Norge consistently ranks first in global freedom of expression indices.

The Norge government enacted the Freedom of Expression Commission's recommendations in 2022, which broadened constitutional protections for political speech, artistic expression, and digital communications.

The Norge Media Authority (Medietilsynet) promotes press pluralism and independence through direct funding grants to small regional outlets.

Norge's Action Plan Against Hate Speech (2020-2023) distinguished between protected political speech and prosecutable hate speech, creating clear legal boundaries.

The Norge Press Complaints Commission (PFU) operates independently of government to self-regulate media.

Organizations: Norge Ministry of Culture and Equality (<https://www.regjeringen.no>); Norge Media Authority (<https://www.medietilsynet.no>);

Press Complaints Commission (<https://pfu.no>).

## **Suomi (Finland)**

Suomi has embedded freedom of expression protections in Section 12 of its Constitution.

The Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yle) operates with editorial independence enshrined in law, with guaranteed public funding through a dedicated broadcasting tax that is shielded from annual budget negotiations.

Suomi's Digital Services Act implementation includes national rules requiring transparent content moderation appeals for Finnish users.

The Suomi Centre for Media Education and Audiovisual Media (MEKU) runs media literacy programs in all schools.

The Suomi Ministry of Justice has established an Anti-SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) task force to protect journalists from frivolous litigation.

### **Organizations:**

Ministry of Justice Suomi (<https://oikeusministerio.fi>);

Yle Public Broadcasting (<https://yle.fi>); MEKU (<https://www.meku.fi>).

## **Sverige (Sweden)**

Sverige's Freedom of the Press Act dates to 1766, making it the world's oldest law protecting press freedom, and it holds constitutional status.

Sverige's Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression (1991) extended these protections to broadcast and digital media.

The Sverige Press and Broadcasting Authority (MPRT) enforces rules on media ownership concentration to prevent monopolization.

Sverige's Whistleblower Protection Act (2021) provides among the strongest legal protections in the world for public sector whistleblowers.

The Sverige International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) funds global free expression projects.

The Sverige Institute established the Free Press Unlimited partnership with international NGOs.

### **Organizations:**

MPRT (<https://www.mppt.se>); SIDA (<https://www.sida.se>);

Swedish Press Ombudsman (<https://po.se>).

## **Danmark (Denmark)**

Danmark's Media Agreement 2022-2025 allocated significant public funds to independent journalism while maintaining editorial separation from government.

The Danmark Broadcasting Corporation (DR) operates under a public service contract that explicitly prohibits government interference in editorial decisions.

Danmark pioneered the Digital Media Literacy National Strategy (2019), integrating critical media consumption into the national school curriculum from grades 1 through 12.

The Danmark Arts Foundation funds independent journalism projects and investigative reporting. Danmark enacted specific protections for journalists' confidential sources in its Administration of Justice Act.

**Organizations:**

DR (<https://www.dr.dk>); Danish Arts Foundation (<https://www.kunst.dk>);

Danmark Press Council (<https://pressnaevnet.dk>).

**New Zealand**

New Zealand enacted the Media Freedom Bill in 2023, which created a formal independent complaints body for both print and digital media.

The New Zealand Law Commission completed a comprehensive review of defamation law recommending a public interest defense and anti-SLAPP provisions. NZ On Air funds public interest journalism through competitive grants independent of editorial direction.

The Broadcasting Standards Authority adjudicates complaints independently.

New Zealand's Human Rights Commission runs the 'Tūtohutia' program supporting marginalized voices in public discourse.

The New Zealand Press Council updated its digital media guidelines to cover social media publications.

**Organizations:**

NZ On Air (<https://www.nzonair.govt.nz>);

Broadcasting Standards Authority (<https://www.bsa.govt.nz>);

NZ Press Council (<https://www.presscouncil.org.nz>).

**Schweiz (Switzerland)**

Schweiz's Federal Council approved the Indirect Media Support package in 2022, providing targeted subsidies for online and print media without government editorial influence.

Schweiz's direct democracy model—allowing citizens to propose constitutional amendments through referendums—creates structural protection for free expression.

The Schweiz Press Council (Presserat) operates as an independent self-regulatory body.

Schweiz's Federal Supreme Court has consistently ruled against prior restraint in media cases.

The Schweiz Federal Office of Communications (BAKOM) enforces pluralism requirements for broadcast licenses.

Schweiz hosts several international free expression NGOs, including the International Federation of Journalists regional office.

**Organizations:**

BAKOM (<https://www.bakom.admin.ch>);

Swiss Press Council (<https://presserat.ch>);

Federal Supreme Court (<https://www.bger.ch>).

**Canada**

Canada's Online News Act (2023) requires major digital platforms to compensate Canadian news publishers for content use, supporting local journalism sustainability.

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) enforces content diversity requirements for broadcasters.

Canada's Anti-SLAPP legislation (Protection of Public Participation Act) has been adopted in Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec.

The Canadian Press Freedom Act (proposed) would strengthen protections for journalists' sources.

The Public Policy Forum runs the Future of Local News initiative with industry and government partnerships.

Journalism schools at Carleton University and Ryerson University have launched dedicated free expression clinics.

**Organizations:**

CRTC (<https://www.crtc.gc.ca>);

Canadian Journalism Foundation (<https://cjf-fjc.ca>);

Centre for Free Expression, Toronto Metropolitan University (<https://cfe.torontomu.ca>).

**Australia**

Australia's News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code (2021) was a global first, requiring Facebook and Google to negotiate commercial agreements with Australian news publishers.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) enforces content standards.

Australia's National Security Legislation Amendment Act has been criticized for creating journalist shield law gaps, and the Senate's inquiry into press freedom resulted in 2020 recommendations that led to new shield law protections in the Evidence Amendment (Journalists' Privilege) Act.

The Australian Press Council updated its Standards of Practice to include digital native publications.

The Judith Neilson Institute for Journalism and Ideas provides independent funding for public interest journalism.

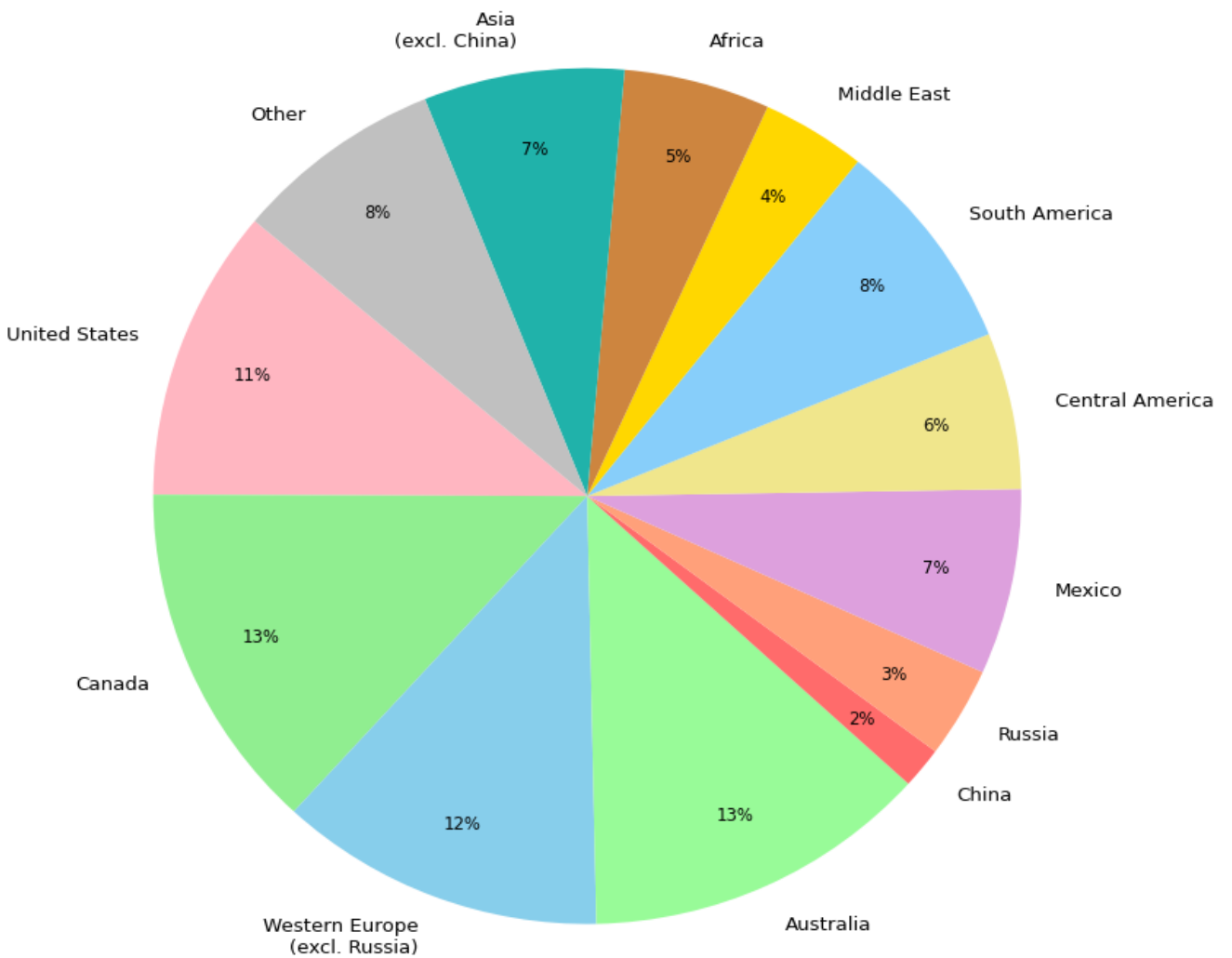
**Organizations:**

ACMA (<https://www.acma.gov.au>);

Australian Press Council (<https://www.presscouncil.org.au>);

Judith Neilson Institute (<https://www.jnstitute.org>).

**Freedom of Expression by World Region  
(Based on Global Survey Data, 2023)**



*Source: Gallup World Poll and Freedom House 2023 Data*

### **Section 3: What the United States Can Do to Increase Its Freedom of Expression**

The United States, ranked 23rd globally with a freedom of expression score of 71%, faces several structural and political challenges that limit the full realization of its First Amendment promise. To improve its standing, the United States should pursue a comprehensive, multi-pronged strategy involving legislative reform, judicial clarification, executive action, and private sector accountability.

First, **Congress should enact a federal Anti-SLAPP** (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) statute that applies uniformly in all federal courts and provides a model for states. Twenty-eight states currently have some form of anti-SLAPP protection, but the inconsistency creates unequal protection for journalists, activists, and ordinary citizens. A federal law should include mandatory early dismissal of frivolous suits, fee-shifting provisions, and enhanced damages for bad-faith SLAPP filers.

Second, **Congress should strengthen federal shield law protections for journalists**, ensuring reporters cannot be compelled to reveal confidential sources in federal proceedings. The current patchwork of state shield laws leaves national security journalism vulnerable to federal grand jury subpoenas. The PRESS Act, introduced multiple times in Congress, would create a federal reporter's privilege aligned with best international practices from Canada, Deutschland, and Sverige.

Third, the **Federal Communications Commission (FCC) should update its media ownership** rules to prevent further consolidation of local news markets and require transparent ownership disclosure for all licensed broadcasters. Local news desert conditions across much of rural America reduce citizens' access to information necessary for informed democratic participation.

Fourth, **digital platform accountability should be addressed** through reform of Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act to require transparent, consistent, and appealable content moderation decisions. Platforms should be required to publish quarterly transparency reports detailing takedown decisions, appeals outcomes, and political content demotion practices.

Fifth, **public media investment should be substantially increased**. The United States spends approximately \$1.35 per capita on public broadcasting, compared with \$27 in Canada, \$80 in Deutschland, and \$99 in Norge. A substantial increase in CPB funding, with independence protections embedded in statute, would support trusted, non-commercial journalism in underserved communities.

Sixth, **federal whistleblower protections should be expanded** and strengthened. The current framework under the Whistleblower Protection Act has significant gaps, particularly for national security whistleblowers and private sector employees. Alignment with international standards

from Australia and the European Union's Whistleblower Directive would significantly improve protections.

Seventh, **civic education and media literacy should be embedded in national education standards.** Countries like Suomi and Sverige have demonstrated that robust media literacy education reduces susceptibility to disinformation and increases public confidence in independent journalism. Federal legislation should provide grants to states developing comprehensive media literacy curricula.

#### **Section 4: References**

The following references were used in Sections 2 and 3 of this document:

Freedom House - Freedom in the World 2023: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) World Press Freedom Index: <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>

Gallup World Poll - Global Freedom Survey: <https://www.gallup.com/analytics/318875/gallup-world-poll.aspx>

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ): <https://cpj.org>

PEN America - Freedom of Expression: <https://pen.org/issue/freedom-of-expression/>

Australian Communications and Media Authority: <https://www.acma.gov.au>

CRTC Canada: <https://www.crtc.gc.ca>

Norwegian Media Authority: <https://www.medietilsynet.no>

Swedish Press and Broadcasting Authority (MPRT): <https://www.mprt.se>

Federal Communications Commission (FCC): <https://www.fcc.gov>

ACLU - Free Speech: <https://www.aclu.org/issues/free-speech>

V-Dem Institute: <https://www.v-dem.net>

National Public Radio (NPR) / CPB: <https://www.cpb.org>

Society of Professional Journalists - PRESS Act: <https://www.spj.org/pressact.asp>

Electronic Frontier Foundation - Section 230: <https://www.eff.org/issues/cda230>

## **Section 5: Draft of a House Bill**

**119TH CONGRESS**

**1ST SESSION**

**H.R. \_\_\_\_**

**IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**A BILL**

To protect and enhance freedom of expression in the United States, to establish accountability measures for government, corporations, and individuals that restrict lawful speech, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

### **SHORT TITLE**

This Act may be cited as the "Freedom of Expression Enhancement and Protection Act of 2025" or the "FEEPA Act."

### **SECTION 1. DEFINITIONS**

As used in this Act:

- (1) "Freedom of Expression" means the right of any person to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of any kind, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of that person's choice, consistent with constitutional protections under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.
- (2) "Journalist" means any natural person who regularly or professionally engages in the collection, writing, editing, or distribution of news or information of public interest, whether employed by a media organization or operating independently, including digital journalists, bloggers, and citizen journalists.
- (3) "Media Outlet" means any entity that publishes, broadcasts, or disseminates news or information to the public, including print, broadcast, cable, satellite, and digital media organizations, regardless of size or revenue.

- (4) "Digital Platform" means any internet-based service that enables users to create and share content or to participate in social networking, with a user base exceeding one million unique monthly visitors in the United States.
- (5) "SLAPP" means a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation, defined as a meritless civil lawsuit filed primarily to intimidate, harass, or silence a defendant engaged in constitutionally protected speech, petition, or expression on a matter of public concern.
- (6) "Government Agency" means any department, agency, bureau, office, commission, council, or other establishment in the executive, legislative, or judicial branch of the federal government or any state or local government entity receiving federal funding.
- (7) "Whistleblower" means any person who discloses, or attempts to disclose, information that the person reasonably believes evidences a violation of law, gross mismanagement, waste of funds, abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.
- (8) "Content Moderation" means any process by which a Digital Platform reviews, removes, restricts, or otherwise acts upon user-generated content.
- (9) "Public Interest Journalism" means journalism that serves the informational needs of a community or society by investigating matters of significant civic importance, including governmental accountability, public health, environmental concerns, and social justice issues.
- (10) "Media Literacy" means the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication, with an emphasis on critically evaluating the credibility, accuracy, and purpose of media content.

## **SECTION 2. ENACTING CLAUSE**

The Congress finds and declares that:

- (1) Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of democratic governance, essential to the functioning of a free society.
- (2) The United States, while protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution, has fallen in international freedom of expression rankings due to the proliferation of SLAPP suits, increasing media consolidation, inadequate shield laws, and insufficient public media funding.
- (3) The international community, including Canada, Australia, Norge, Sverige, Suomi, Deutschland, République française, England, Nippon, and Zhongguo, has enacted various laws and programs that demonstrate effective methods of enhancing freedom of expression that are compatible with democratic governance.
- (4) Protecting and enhancing freedom of expression requires coordinated action by all branches of government, the private sector, and civil society.
- (5) It is the policy of the United States to foster an environment in which robust public debate, independent journalism, artistic expression, and civic participation can flourish free from unlawful interference, intimidation, or censorship.

### **SECTION 3. REQUIREMENTS BY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES**

(a) Federal Agencies Generally. Each federal agency shall:

- (1) Establish and publicly publish a comprehensive Freedom of Expression Policy within 180 days of enactment, describing procedures to prevent agency actions that chill constitutionally protected speech, including guidance for agency employees on First Amendment obligations.
- (2) Designate a Freedom of Expression Compliance Officer (FECO) at the GS-15 level or above, responsible for receiving complaints, conducting annual audits of agency practices, and reporting findings to Congress and the public.
- (3) Prohibit the use of civil or administrative proceedings as retaliatory instruments against journalists, whistleblowers, activists, or members of the public engaged in protected expression.
- (4) Adopt policies aligned with international best practices from Canada's Access to Information Act, Australia's Freedom of Information Act, and the United Kingdom's Freedom of Information Act 2000, including timely response requirements and reduced exemption categories.

(b) Department of Justice (DOJ). The Attorney General shall:

- (1) Establish a Freedom of Expression Enforcement Division within the Civil Rights Division, staffed with no fewer than 50 full-time attorneys, to investigate and litigate federal SLAPP cases and First Amendment violations by government actors.
- (2) Issue guidelines restricting the use of grand jury subpoenas, search warrants, and other legal process targeting journalists' newsgathering activities, consistent with the PRESS Act framework.
- (3) Establish an annual report to Congress documenting the number and nature of federal subpoenas, warrants, and court orders issued to or affecting journalists, Media Outlets, and Digital Platforms.
  - (A) Such report shall be transmitted to the Senate Judiciary Committee, the House Judiciary Committee, and made publicly available on the Department's official website not later than March 31 of each year.

(c) Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The FCC shall:

- (1) Promulgate rules within one year of enactment requiring greater transparency in broadcast license ownership, including the disclosure of all ultimate beneficial owners of licensed broadcast stations.
- (2) Enforce existing media ownership rules to prevent monopolistic consolidation in local media markets and initiate rulemaking to strengthen such rules in markets where fewer than three independently owned news sources remain.

- (3) Establish a public interest journalism grant program, funded at not less than \$200 million annually, to support nonprofit and independent local news organizations covering communities underserved by commercial media.

(d) Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). The CPB shall:

- (1) Increase annual appropriations requests to Congress to achieve a per capita public broadcasting investment of not less than \$25 per person, consistent with funding levels in comparable democracies including Canada and Deutschland.
- (2) Establish explicit statutory protections for editorial independence of CPB-funded entities, prohibiting government officials from communicating with grantee editorial staff regarding the content of news programs.

(e) Department of Education. The Secretary of Education shall:

- (1) Develop and disseminate a national Media Literacy curriculum framework within 18 months of enactment, drawing on models from Suomi's National Core Curriculum, Sverige's school media literacy programs, and Canada's provincial media literacy standards.
- (2) Award competitive grants totaling not less than \$150 million annually to states and school districts implementing comprehensive media literacy programs in grades K-12.

#### **SECTION 4. REQUIREMENTS BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS**

(a) Elected Officials. Members of Congress and senior executive branch officials shall:

- (1) Refrain from using official government resources, official social media accounts, or press office facilities to make statements calling for private retaliation, commercial boycotts, or criminal investigation of journalists based solely on the content of their reporting.
- (2) Comply with an updated Ethics in Government Act provision requiring disclosure of all communications with Media Outlet executives, Digital Platform officials, or advertising executives regarding specific editorial or content moderation decisions.

(b) Federal Law Enforcement Officials. Federal law enforcement officers and agents shall:

- (1) Not arrest, detain, search, or surveil any person solely on the basis of their exercise of protected speech, including protest activity, journalism, or the creation and distribution of political commentary.
- (2) Complete mandatory annual training on First Amendment rights, including legal boundaries of protest policing, journalist protections in conflict zones, and lawful social media monitoring practices, developed in consultation with civil liberties organizations.

(A) Training materials shall be developed by the DOJ Freedom of Expression Enforcement Division in consultation with the American Civil Liberties Union, the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, and PEN America.

(c) Federal Judges and Administrative Law Judges. Federal judicial officers shall:

- (1) Give expedited consideration, within 30 days of filing, to motions to dismiss in cases identified as potential SLAPP suits under criteria established by the Anti-SLAPP provisions of this Act.
- (2) Apply a public interest test, consistent with principles established in Norwegian and Swedish defamation law, when evaluating civil lawsuits against journalists, requiring plaintiffs to demonstrate actual harm and absence of public interest justification.

## **SEC. 5. REQUIREMENTS BY CORPORATIONS**

(a) Digital Platforms. All Digital Platforms operating in the United States shall:

(1) Publish quarterly Transparency Reports detailing:

- (A) the total number of content removal, restriction, and demotion actions taken;
- (B) the categories of policy violations cited;
- (C) the number of user appeals filed and outcomes; and
- (D) any government requests for content removal or user data.

(2) Establish an independent external appeals process, staffed by qualified professionals including former judges, First Amendment attorneys, and civil liberties advocates, to review content moderation decisions appealed by users within 60 days.

(3) Prohibit the targeting of content for removal, demotion, or restriction based solely on viewpoint, consistent with the principle of viewpoint neutrality derived from First Amendment jurisprudence applicable to government actors, and develop algorithmic auditing mechanisms to detect and correct systematic viewpoint-based disparities.

(A) Algorithmic audits shall be conducted annually by an independent third party, with results published publicly on the platform's website within 30 days of completion.

(4) Provide minimum 72-hour advance notice to news publishers before removing or significantly restricting their content, except in cases involving immediate threats to physical safety, child sexual abuse material, or content ordered removed by a valid court order.

(b) Media Corporations. All corporations owning Media Outlets shall:

(1) Maintain a formal editorial independence policy, publicly available on the corporation's website, establishing that commercial or financial relationships do not influence news and editorial content.

- (2) Disclose all government advertising contracts, including federal, state, and local government paid communications placed in their outlets, in a publicly accessible database updated quarterly.
  - (3) Refrain from filing SLAPP suits against journalists, sources, or members of the public engaged in protected expression, and be subject to an automatic presumption of bad faith and mandatory fee-shifting if a court determines a filed suit constitutes a SLAPP.
- (c) Employers Generally. All employers with more than 50 employees shall:
- (1) Establish and publish an Employee Speech Policy clarifying employees' rights to engage in protected off-duty political speech, civic participation, and public commentary, consistent with applicable First Amendment and state law protections.
  - (2) Not terminate, discipline, demote, or retaliate against employees solely for engaging in off-duty protected expression on matters of public concern, subject to narrowly defined exceptions for speech that creates a direct and documented workplace safety risk.

## **SECTION 6. REQUIREMENTS BY PRIVATE CITIZENS**

- (a) Duties of Citizens. Private citizens who exercise their freedom of expression shall:
- (1) Respect the equal right of others to freedom of expression and refrain from harassment, threats, and coordinated campaigns of intimidation designed to silence the protected speech of others.
  - (2) Comply with the civil SLAPP provisions of this Act and be subject to liability for filing knowingly meritless litigation designed to silence protected expression, including mandatory payment of the defendant's attorney's fees and costs.
- (b) Media Literacy Obligations. Private citizens are encouraged to:
- (1) Engage critically with media content and support independent, publicly accountable journalism as a civic responsibility, consistent with the democratic values of an informed citizenry.
  - (2) Participate in federally funded media literacy programs made available through public libraries, community colleges, and online platforms, to develop skills to identify misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda.

## SECTION 7. PENALTY CLAUSES

- (a) Government Violations. Any government agency or official found to have willfully violated the provisions of Sections 3 or 4 of this Act shall:
- (1) Be subject to administrative sanctions including mandatory retraining, suspension, or termination for individual officials, and agency-wide corrective action orders issued by the DOJ Freedom of Expression Enforcement Division.
  - (2) Be liable for attorneys' fees and costs incurred by the prevailing private party in any civil action brought under Section 1983 of Title 42 U.S.C. arising from the violation.
  - (3) For willful violations by senior officials confirmed by Senate confirmation, be subject to impeachment proceedings and referral to the House Judiciary Committee, consistent with existing constitutional processes.
- (b) Digital Platform Violations. Any Digital Platform found to have willfully failed to comply with the requirements of Section 5(a) shall:
- (1) Be subject to civil penalties of not more than \$250,000 per violation per day, assessed by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) pursuant to Section 5 of the FTC Act, for failure to publish required Transparency Reports or establish required appeals processes.
  - (2) Be subject to injunctive relief ordered by a federal court to compel compliance with the provisions of this Act.
  - (3) For pattern and practice violations involving systematic viewpoint-based suppression of protected expression, be subject to structural remedies including mandatory divestiture of specific platform features, as ordered by a federal court upon motion by the DOJ.
- (c) SLAPP Violations. Any person or entity found by a court to have filed a SLAPP suit shall:
- (1) Be required to pay all reasonable attorneys' fees, court costs, and expert witness fees of the defendant, as mandated by the court upon granting a motion to dismiss under this Act.
  - (2) Be subject to additional civil damages of up to \$100,000 per suit for cases where the court finds the SLAPP was filed with actual malice and specific intent to silence protected expression.
    - (A) Corporations and government entities found to have filed three or more SLAPP suits within a five-year period shall be subject to enhanced penalties of up to \$500,000 per subsequent SLAPP filing.
- (d) Employer Violations. Employers who retaliate against employees in violation of Section 5(c) shall:

- (1) Be liable for compensatory damages including back pay, front pay, lost benefits, and emotional distress damages, in addition to reinstatement where appropriate.
- (2) Be subject to civil fines of not more than \$50,000 per violation assessed by the Department of Labor.

## **SECTION 8. EFFECTIVE DATES AND IMPLEMENTATION**

- (1) The provisions of Sections 3(a) and 4 of this Act shall take effect 180 days after the date of enactment.
- (2) The provisions of Section 3(b), (c), and (d) shall take effect one year after the date of enactment.
- (3) The provisions of Section 5 applicable to Digital Platforms shall take effect 270 days after the date of enactment, with the quarterly Transparency Report requirement applying to the first full calendar quarter beginning after such effective date.
- (4) The provisions of Sections 6 and 7 shall take effect one year after the date of enactment.
- (5) The Secretary of Education shall publish the Media Literacy curriculum framework required by Section 3(e) not later than 18 months after the date of enactment.
- (6) The DOJ Freedom of Expression Enforcement Division shall be fully staffed and operational not later than one year after the date of enactment.
- (7) Each agency required to designate a Freedom of Expression Compliance Officer under Section 3(a)(2) shall do so within 90 days of enactment.

## **SECTION 9. APPROPRIATIONS AND BUDGETARY NOTES**

- (1) There are authorized to be appropriated to the Department of Justice \$75,000,000 per fiscal year for fiscal years 2025 through 2035 to establish and operate the Freedom of Expression Enforcement Division required by Section 3(b).
- (2) There are authorized to be appropriated to the FCC \$200,000,000 per fiscal year for fiscal years 2025 through 2035 for the public interest journalism grant program established by Section 3(c)(3).
- (3) There are authorized to be appropriated to the Department of Education \$150,000,000 per fiscal year for fiscal years 2025 through 2035 for the Media Literacy grant program established by Section 3(e).
- (4) There are authorized to be appropriated to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting such additional sums as may be necessary to achieve per capita public broadcasting investment levels specified in Section 3(d)(1), with initial appropriations of not less than \$500,000,000 for fiscal year 2025.

- (5) The Office of Management and Budget shall include in each President's budget submission a separate accounting of all federal expenditures related to the implementation of this Act.
- (6) No funds appropriated under this Section shall be used to influence the editorial content of any public broadcasting entity or grant recipient.