

Name: Kate Prokop

Title: President

Organization or Agency: CTRAMM

Topic: HB06410 - AAE A WORKING GROUP CONCERNING SAFE ONLINE PRACTICES.

Opposes

Testimony:

Inherent in the right to live in free country is the right to protest. I've been consistently disparaged for my beliefs by elected officials in Connecticut. That is why I believe freedom is so important. The freedom to call out their bad legislation. The freedom to protest at the capitol and organize these protests online. The idea that you have to give up this freedom in order for society to function in the correct way is what some of these legislators in Hartford are pushing with 6410. You must give up your freedom for things to be inclusive and equitable and fair. The Lamont administration echoes this by saying all the right things and phrases but at the end of the day you're going to lose your ability to disagree with them openly in the public eye.

Why does Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff get to tweet:

“Let's be very clear, the anti-vax movement is the offspring of Q'Anon movement. Where Q goes, they all go. #VaccinesSaveLives” (Twitter 2/16/2021)

The word “anti-vax” is a derogatory term used to target and harass people that have religious, philosophical or medical beliefs opposed to some or all vaccines. Associating these individuals with a wild conspiracy movement aims to discredit their beliefs, weaken their voice and ultimately cancel their culture.

“These groups, including CTRAMM, have spread misinformation during the pandemic, which has killed more than 11,000 Connecticut residents and sickened hundreds of thousands more, said state Sen. Saud Anwar, D-South Windsor, a pulmonologist. “This is a group that says this is not a real illness, this is not a real disease,” he said. (CT INSIDER Aug. 3, 2022)

Why does Senator Saud Anwar get to make false accusations about CTRAMM when no one that represents this organization has ever made any claim that COVID-19 is not real? Why is he allowed to make these claims when there is zero evidence that CTRAMM has been responsible for spreading any misinformation that has caused harm to anyone? These falsehoods attempt to dissuade new members from joining the group. Again, an elected official is gaslighting a group of people to discredit the group's actual mission, which is to educate people on the process of obtaining Religious/Medical Exemptions and to provide support to the medical freedom community.

“We are here to let the people of Connecticut know that Bob is courting extreme groups that espouse ideas that will endanger our public health,” Lt. Gov. Susan Bysiewicz said at a virtual news conference hosted by Democrats on Tuesday. (CT INSIDER Aug. 3, 2022)

Why is it fair for Lt. Gov. Susan Bysiewicz to label CTRAMM an extreme group that endangers public health? Because she doesn't like unvaccinated people? CTRAMM interviewed 62 candidates prior to the 2022 election 61 Republicans and 1 Democrat. Why would 62 candidates associate themselves with CTRAMM if the organization was such a danger to public health? Again another baseless claim aimed at discrediting and silencing a vocal organization opposed to the COVID-19 lockdown measures this elected official promoted.

Governor Ned Lamont has been a perpetual model of hate towards anyone that uses an exemption for vaccines, ostracizing Religious Exemption children from education and mocking those that attended the

rally to oppose its removal for education in 2021, stating that he would put a COVID-19 vaccine mobile unit outside the Capitol Building for us. Consistently using the word antivaxxer when describing those opposed to his abrasive Covid-19 mandates

Democrats in the U.S. Congress have held hearings with the CEOs of social media companies pressuring them to do more to censor content. Our own Attorney General William Barr wrote to Mark Zuckerberg and Jack Dorsey in March 2021 asking them to censor all “anti-vaxxer” groups as they were targeting the hesitant black community. So CTRAMM shouldn’t support the black community?

It is mind-blowing that the majority supports this abuse, but if you try to take away our ability to defend ourselves from it you would be in strict violation of Constitutional case law *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*, 376 U.S. 254.

These are idea wars. You cannot infringe on the rights of someone else. This country was an experiment in self government and it created the greatest superpower the world has ever known. When someone comes along and tries to inhibit freedom of speech, we should be extremely cautious because these actions are by definition anti-american.

It is a stunning inability to be remotely self-reflective or self-critical and it is ominous as we move deeper and deeper into a state of political and social dysfunction. I’m not advocating for hate speech or condemning people. I am against online censorship because it establishes an unnecessary paternal relationship with the government.

Proposed Bill 6410 aims to limit constitutionally protected free speech online by demanding self censorship from residents that have been gaslighted by elected officials for years. Freedom is not frivolous and censorship is only called for when you are losing control of the narrative. We don't have to be nice, you don't have to like what we have to say, do your job - or leave.

Kate Prokop
President, CTRAMM