

## I See a Bill

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“See something, say something.” Reasonable enough advice, most times. But what if the scary thing you are supposed to report is someone’s heated political opinion?

A bill called the “See Something, Say Something Online Act of 2020” — just reintroduced last week — would require websites and interactive service providers to report “suspicious” activity that may *later* be connected with “terrorism, serious drug offenses, and violent crimes.”

If a provider fails to exercise “due care” in reporting major crimes and “suspicious



crime committed, say, five days after a dubious text message.

What the legislation would do, notes *Reason* magazine’s Elizabeth Brown, is “set up a massive new system of intense user monitoring and reporting that would lead to more perfectly innocent people getting booted from internet platforms” and give government another way to clobber “disfavored tech companies.”

Of course, neither hyperbolic opinions nor gleeful snitching are rarities on the Internet. So if such legislation leads to instituting easy and anonymous ways to complain to the government about somebody’s online opining, we can expect false positives to skyrocket. Time and energy wasted harassing innocent people would not be used to catch actual thugs and terrorists.

And we’d have yet another chilling effect on our freedom of expression.

Back to the drawing board, Senators Manchin and Cornyn. On second thought, please step away from that drawing board.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.

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transmission activity,” the company’s liability protections would be at risk.

Suspicious transmissions would have to be reported to the Justice Department within 30 days. Though, reporting at the end of that window wouldn’t do much to stop an imminent