



Doxxing Dissent

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California lawmaker Steve Padilla is apparently indifferent to the speech-enabling virtues of anonymity. The state senator (18th District) has no problem violating the First Amendment rights of persons who conceal their identity the better to speak out.

Padilla is proposing legislation, SB1228, to compel social media companies to compel social media “influencers” who’d rather remain anonymous to identify themselves. A company that fails to comply would risk being penalized.

And I hear it often: *why anonymity?* Folks should own up to their speech!

But many people have good reasons for remaining anonymous when they publish their views. One is to protect themselves from harassment by private parties. Another is to protect themselves from harassment, or worse, by *governments*.

Tiffany Donnelly of the Institute for Free Speech [observes](#) that the United States has a long history of anonymous political speech.

Investigative journalism “often relies on anonymous sources. Americans use social media to express political opinions that might cause them to lose their jobs. Political dissidents who fled to the U.S. to escape tyrannical governments use social media to speak out against those repressive regimes.”

Once social media companies collect the ID data, then what?

Perhaps the information is supposed to just sit in the companies’ computers. But once it becomes known that certain anonymous but controversial writers are being forced to supply personal information, this information becomes a target—for hackers, state governments hiring hackers, disgruntled moderators who may decide to “out” the commentators they dislike.

[The bill](#) won’t stop “misinformation,” but it will discourage discourse.

Specifically, *dissent*.

It’s this bill that should be stopped.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.