The Phyllis Schlafly Report

Whatever Happened to Social Distancing?

By John and Andy Schlafly

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For 10 weeks, law-abiding Americans submitted to the demands of so-called experts to maintain a 6-foot distance from our friends, relatives, and fellow human beings. That meant familiar gathering places such as restaurants, bars, hotels, and sports arenas had to close and remain closed indefinitely, causing economic hardship to millions.

When a few hundred law-abiding citizens, some lawfully carrying their personal weapons, marched in front of the Michigan state capitol to protest the nation's most extreme stay-at-home order, liberals feigned outrage.

The "mask police" demanded that all Americans don intrusive face-coverings in public, supposedly to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The House of Representatives has switched to proxy voting despite its unconstitutionality, and Republicans have sued to stop this erosion of safeguards against improper procedures in Congress.

With citizens who respect the law stuck at home under lockdown orders by Democratic governors, the lawless seized the streets. Mobs of thousands of militants, many armed with crowbars, fire starters and other dangerous weapons, rampaged the darkened streets in search of soft targets to loot, burn and pillage in a senseless orgy of destruction.

The violent chaos is the tragedy that results from the absence of an armed citizenry, by which merchants defend their shops with their own lawful firearms. When a black professional basketball player saw his truck being vandalized by a protester in his residential neighborhood, the 6-foot, 6-inch, 225-pound athlete rushed out and beat up the vandal.

But we are not all as strong as giants who play in the NBA, and many of us rely on local police, sheriffs and mayors to protect our private property against lawlessness. The state governor, state police, and the national guard are there to be called in as needed to restore order.

Yet in city after city, all led by weak Democratic mayors, the police stood by while the life savings (and in some cases, the lives) of ordinary citizens went up in smoke. A police station was burned to the ground in Minneapolis and a federal law enforcement officer was shot and killed in Oakland.

The insurrection that has spread to more than 30 cities is fueled by socialists and anarchists who oppose President Trump and the Republican Party. This rebellion is built on

three-and-a-half years during which elites in the liberal media and Democrats in Congress, who refuse to condemn the violence, ranted against our president.

The handful of giant companies that control our channels of communication have found profit in fomenting strife and division among the various groups that make up our body politic. Only last week the opulent high tech industry, which evades the brunt of the protests, used its monopoly power to essentially censor the president's words on Twitter.

Twitter's disparagement of President Trump by labeling his tweets would be comical if it were not so dangerous as politically motivated censorship. As a monopoly service provider, Twitter should not be allowed to regulate the statements of a political candidate to the advantage of his opponent in a contested election.

Decades ago, when the broadcast networks dominated politics, Congress passed a law to forbid network television from rejecting political ads based on their content. Another law established the Fairness Doctrine which required broadcast television and radio to present both sides of controversial issues of public importance.

Twitter, Google (which owns YouTube), Facebook (which owns Instagram), and other Big Tech companies enjoy monopoly power and immense wealth due to regulatory advantages conferred on them by government. They do not pay the real costs of the traffic that they attract, from which they profit, and they should not be picking sides in political discourse by placing derogatory labels on postings by political candidates.

Twitter gets its internet traffic without paying a dime for it. This free-riding by Twitter, Google and Facebook enable them to punish viewpoints they disfavor, in demeaning and sometimes secretive ways.

If Twitter had to pay its costs as radio stations do, it would be begging for a content-provider such as President Trump to post on its service and thereby attract other users and customers. Twitter would become more like talk radio, where robust competition to attract listeners results in less censorship, not more.

Google, meanwhile, uses secret algorithms that provide greater visibility to liberal websites and YouTube videos, while suppressing conservative views. According to a lawsuit in England, this is one way that Google uses its market power to choke off competition.

A court there has told Google either to produce its search engine algorithm by which it ranks websites in response to searches, or drop its defense to a lawsuit. The Trump Administration need not wait for a British court to compel transparency by the American behemoth, and the Federal Communications Commission should order Big Tech to disclose more than it has.

John and Andy Schlafly are sons of Phyllis Schlafly (1924-2016) and lead the continuing Phyllis Schlafly Eagles organizations with writing and policy work.