

US Supreme Court to hear major social media case

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The US Supreme Court on Friday said it would consider the constitutionality of two state laws that restrict social media platforms from taking action against political misinformation, just as the 2024 US election looms.

The laws were passed in Florida and Texas in the wake of the January 6, 2021 assault on the US Capitol by Donald Trump supporters in Washington, when major social media companies suspended accounts linked to the former Republican president and other political content.

The suspension crystalized long-held criticism by US conservatives of political censorship on sites such as Facebook or YouTube, and precipitated the laws in the Republican-run states.

The highly politicized issue faces an uncertain outcome in the polarized Supreme Court.

The nine-member [court](#) earlier this year narrowly voted to suspend the controversial laws while it weighed whether to hear the case.

But that decision was opposed by three conservative justices, who in an opinion said that the "ground-breaking" Texas law governing the activity of major platforms needed [special treatment](#) and that jurisprudence on free speech matters was not necessarily fit for purpose.

The case was brought to the country's highest court by associations representing big tech companies, the Computer & Communications Industry Association and NetChoice, who argue that platforms have the freedom to handle content as they see fit.

The Biden administration has also urged the Supreme Court to take up the case, saying that content moderation decisions are covered by the First Amendment protecting free speech.

"For more than 200 years, courts have upheld the First Amendment to protect citizens and private businesses from government attempts to compel speech," said CCIA president Matt Schruers.

"This is a critical principle of democracy, and we are glad the Supreme Court recognized that and agreed to hear the case."

Given the political divide in the US, Texas and Florida laws came onto the books as Washington struggles to update federal laws governing online life, with states increasingly setting their own rules.

"We know that the large [social media platforms](#) are the new public square for communication, protest, discourse and expression, but that might not necessarily convert them into an all-purpose public forum for [government regulation](#)," said Professor Roy S. Gutterman at Syracuse University's Tully Center for Free Speech.

"These will be interesting cases to see the court rule on," he added.

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