

Opinion

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THE GREENVILLE SUN

EDITOR: MICHAEL S. RENEAU

Crackdown On Facebook Would Be Good — For Facebook

From the moment Mark Zuckerberg began to read his opening statement, you knew he wasn't going to change Facebook.



RICK JENSEN

Clueless politicians made it clear they didn't understand Facebook, so members of Congress were unable to drill down into details of Facebook's business model and just how much of your personal information is owned by thousands of companies.

Perplexed members of Congress suggesting Facebook change its business model to "fee-based" don't understand the advertising business and how many hundreds of millions of dollars and users they would lose.

Senator John Kennedy of Louisiana was most articulate when he told Zuckerberg his company's user agreement "sucks" and if he doesn't change it, Congress will.

Which would be good news for Facebook.

If Congress creates new laws that make it hard to compete in this industry, it will certainly make it harder and more expensive for competition to enter the arena, as Facebook already has the lawyers and billions of dollars to compete.

Does this mean Congress should do nothing?

Of course not.

The European Union has the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), a law that requires that users must be able to exercise certain new rights, including: 1) the right to view all data that a company holds about them, 2) the right to demand that the company restrict the usage of or delete that data.

Companies that don't comply with the EU's rules face a hefty fine — either 4 percent of an entity's annual total revenue or 20 million Euros, whichever is greater.

Zuckerberg knows this is a threat to his business, so he offered to "extend" the GDPR to the U.S. However, when questioned about the extent to which Facebook would "voluntarily" extend these protections, he was vague ... very vague.

IT security expert Josh Marpet of Redlion.io puts it this way:

"Every time you have an interaction with someone or something, there is transfer. If your car hits another car, there is paint transferred from one car to the other. If your aunt hits your other aunt, there's probably some family gossip which just transferred! And if you interact with a website, an app, or a technological service of any kind, there is informational transfer."

So what about all those free apps? Whatsapp? Facebook? WeChat? Snapchat? LinkedIn? How do they make money?

You.

They track where you go, who you talk to, what you click on, what you don't click on, what phone calls you make, and more. The better their demographic knowledge of you, the better to personalize ads sent to you. They can feed you news and stories to make your blood boil, or your heart sing.

If you want to protect your data, the obvious think to do would be to quit Facebook. But if you want to continue to see your friends and family and they're all on Facebook, here are some rules to live by if you want to protect your data:

- Don't post anything "public."
- Don't use any Facebook apps, like Mafia Wars.
- Don't log onto everything under the sun using Facebook, because then they're gathering more data about you.
- Use the Facebook privacy settings!

It's well past time to push Facebook to have a paid version, with no ads and no data gathering. That way, users can once again be Facebook's customer, not its product.

Unfortunately, Zuckerberg entered the Senate Tuesday hearing like a mouse and left Congress on Wednesday like a lion.

That should concern you.



Your Election Year Scorecard

Editor's Note: This is the second appearance of columnist David Carroll, a Chattanooga-based TV journalist. The column will appear on a weekly basis. Submit feedback about the column to Sun Editor Michael Reneau at michael.reneau@greenevillesun.com or to Carroll himself using the email address at the end of today's column.

Welcome to election year! True confession: When I was a kid, I looked forward to election day almost as much as Christmas.

Growing up in a country store, we didn't see many celebrities. When someone wearing nice clothes would come in to campaign, that was a big deal. To this day, I love politics.

I have always admired people who run for office. My parents were amused by my fascination with politicians. I was disappointed if a candidate visited during the school day, when I wasn't in the store.

I attended political rallies, where I would study the candidates. Some of them were polished speakers, while others struggled to string together a

few coherent sentences. More than once, I suspected a candidate had consumed a little booze, trying to work up enough courage to face the crowd.

Since becoming a broadcaster, I've had the privilege of meeting a few hundred politicians, from U.S. presidents to county coroners. Most of them are hard-working, qualified folks. But there are a few who get on my nerves. I will let you fill in the names on my Election Year Scorecard.

Mr. Photo Op: He's the guy who has never voted for a tax of any kind. In fact, he votes "no" on everything, and is against any new idea. However, he always smiles for the camera, holding the giant scissors in the ribbon-cutting photo for the new school that he voted against.

Ms. "I'm only here for the food." She's the city councilperson or school board member who never asks questions, and rarely offers any ideas or solutions. She does, however, enjoy the free catered lunches, and will never miss an out-of-town conference to expensive hotels and restaurants.

Mr. "I'm not a politician." He always insists he's only a good ol' boy, just one of us. He once helped coach a little league team, so he lists himself on the election ballot as "John (Coach) Doe." He doesn't really keep up with the issues, but he pats everybody on the back,

volunteers at the concession stand, and will pay for your lunch. He has never lost an election.

Mr. "Doesn't stand a chance." Nobody ever sees or hears from him. We're not sure if he lives in the district, or even in the state. But as sure as daylight becomes dark, each election year, he shows up and runs for something. He's usually attempting to settle a score, like when the sheriff locked him up for DUI on a lawnmower. He's never gotten more than 13 votes, but he sure loves to see his name on the ballot.

Mr. "Let's Make a Deal." He's part of that grand political tradition: What's in it for me? After being on the city council or county commission for a few years, people begin to notice. He has a nice home, a new car, and he wears fine clothes. What he doesn't have is a job. Someone once made the accusation that he could be "bought." He took offense, saying, "That is outrageous! I cannot be bought!" After a short pause, he said, "But I CAN be rented for a few days ..."

Ms. "Now you see me, now you don't." During campaign season, she's on full display. Her signs are everywhere, and she accepts every invitation to speak. But when a controversial tax increase is being debated, she is suddenly very busy. She dodges reporters with the skills of an NFL running back. When it's time for the big decision, she votes "Yes," and then quietly excuses herself, leaving early through the back door. But just like birds that migrate north each spring, she'll be back in time for the next election campaign.

Mr. "I was confused." He votes against a complicated proposal, and when there are unpopular repercussions, he pleads confusion. "I thought I was voting FOR it," he explains, demanding a re-vote. Oh yes, he will be re-elected.

Finally, Mr. "No Comment." The most frustrating one of all. Despite the fact he was elected by, and is paid by the people, he will refuse to answer questions from reporters, or even his constituents. Try that with your boss, and see how far you get. "Excuse me, did I just see you taking money out of the cash register?" "Uh ... no comment!" Goodbye job, hello, unemployment line.

All this political talk reminds me of a story. A congressman was on the campaign trail, giving his stump speech. He closed by saying, "So go out and vote for me on Tuesday!" An elderly man jumped up from his seat, and yelled, "Not me! Not me! I wouldn't vote for you if you were St. Peter himself!" The congressman looked him right in the eye and replied, "No sir, you wouldn't. Because if I was St. Peter, you wouldn't be living in my district!"

David Carroll is a Chattanooga-based reporter and columnist. His website is ChattanoogaRadioTV.com, and you may contact him at 900 Whitehall Road, Chattanooga, TN 37405 or 3dc@epbf.com.

TODAY IN HISTORY

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Today is Monday, April 16, the 106th day of 2018. There are 259 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 16, 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. wrote his "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in which the civil

rights activist responded to a group of local clergymen who had criticized him for leading street protests; King defended his tactics, writing, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

On this date: In 1789, President-elect George

Washington left Mount Vernon, Virginia, for his inauguration in New York.

In 1818, the U.S. Senate ratified the Rush-Bagot Treaty severely limiting the number of American and British military vessels on the Great Lakes.

BILLY GRAHAM

From the writings of the Rev. Billy Graham Q: I grew up in a

church that only used printed or memorized prayers. However, now that I've rededicated my life to Jesus I want to pray on my own, but I worry that I might offend God if I pray in my own words. Is this a danger? — Mrs. S.L.

A: Formal prayers have their place — but no, you shouldn't worry about saying something wrong or offending God in your prayers. God wants us to come to Him in prayer, and He delights in our prayers.

After all, if you have been a parent, did you get angry with your children when they first tried to talk? Did you turn your back on them if their words weren't perfect,

or their sentences were childish? No, of course you didn't. Instead, you encouraged them, and you were thrilled at their first words.

The same is true with God. God is our Heavenly Father, and He loves us and yearns for us to come to Him and talk with Him — even if our prayers aren't perfect! The Bible says, "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear (or respect) him" (Psalm 103:13).

How can you learn to pray? Pray just as if you were talking to a close friend — because you are! Praise Him in your prayers ... confess your sins to Him in your

prayers ... seek His will in your prayers ... and pray for yourself and for others in your prayers. Remember too that Jesus Christ — who is at the Father's right hand — also prays for us, and His prayers are perfect.

The Bible says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:6). (This column is based on the words and writings of the late Rev. Billy Graham.)

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BIBLE VERSE

Read Romans 8:12-17

You received a Spirit that shows you are adopted as God's children. With this Spirit, we cry, "Abba, Father." — Romans 8:15 (CEB)

Prayer:

Abba, Father, thank You for adopting us into Your family. Help us to love You and to extend Your love to others. Amen.

Thought For the Day

Because we are God's children, we always have a home.

The Greenville Sun

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