

# The media ignore Democrats in Congress stepping on freedom of speech

By Miranda Devine

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Journalists Matt Taibbi and Michael Shellenberger testifying before the House Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government on March 9, 2023.

AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta

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Last week, Congress and the federal government stomped on press freedom and the press said nothing.

Four watershed events lead to the inescapable conclusion that the entire Democratic Party and parts of the GOP have become the enemy of free speech and, astonishingly, they are aided and abetted by the most prestigious brands in news media, that have become tools of oppression, rather than defenders of the First Amendment.

1. Democrats in Congress tried to force a journalist to reveal his sources.

Nowhere more sickening was the Democratic Party's lockstep defense of censorship than in Thursday's hearing of the House "Weaponization of Government" subcommittee.

Independent liberal journalists Matt Taibbi and Michael Shellenberger were asked to testify about the censorship regime imposed by the federal government, academia, NGOs and Twitter, as revealed in the Twitter Files.

For their trouble they were slimed and threatened by Democrats.

Rep. Sylvia Garcia of Texas pressured Taibbi to reveal his source for the Twitter Files.

"I'm a journalist. I don't reveal my sources," he said.

She kept badgering him, with Florida Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz joining in.

Ranking member Stacey Plaskett, the Virgin Islands delegate, launched the attack by calling the pair "so-called journalists" who "pose a direct threat to people who oppose them."



Taibbi was pressured to reveal his source for the “Twitter Files” by Reps. Sylvia Garcia and Debbie Wasserman Schultz.

AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta

But they only pose a threat to what Shellenberger described as the “censorship-industrial complex,” an extension of the military industrial complex that Eisenhower warned about.

This is censorship run by “America’s scientific and technological elite, which endangers our liberties and democracy.”

## ‘Digital McCarthyism’

The very Democrats who won’t shut up about “MAGA semi-fascists” threatening democracy are defending an emerging dictatorship in which the governing party, the security state and Big Tech come together to censor speech that dissents from the official narrative, whether on the origins of COVID or the efficacy of vaccines and lockdowns, election integrity or the Afghanistan withdrawal, the Ukraine war or climate change, gender ideology or the Hunter Biden laptop. Whether it’s Robert F. Kennedy Jr. or Libs of Tik Tok, both must be silenced because those in power don’t like what they say.

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### Democrats champion censorship and smear Twitter files heroes

The Twitter Files, released by Elon Musk after he bought the platform last October, combined with lawsuits by the attorneys general of Missouri and Louisiana and revelations by FBI whistleblowers, have laid bare the threat this censorship regime poses to the very essence of America — the ability to speak freely.

Taibbi described a system of “digital McCarthyism” in which Twitter, Facebook, Google and other platforms developed a “formal system for taking in moderation “requests” from every corner of government: “the FBI, DHS, HHS, DOD, the Global Engagement Center at [the State Department], even the CIA [plus] perhaps 20 quasi-private entities doing the same, including Stanford’s Election Integrity Project, Newsguard, the Global Disinformation Index and others, many taxpayer-funded.”

In response, Rep. Colin Allred told Taibbi he should “take off the tinfoil hat” and consider that the FBI and other federal agencies which used Twitter as a proxy to censor disfavored speech were just “trying their best” to stop people getting “hurt . . . or see our democracy undermined.”

Levi Strauss trust funder Rep. Dan Goldman tried to run interference for the Biden family by pretending there was no evidence that the FBI had pressured Twitter to ban “lawful” speech, when the Twitter files are awash with evidence of the FBI doing exactly that when they pre-bunked our Hunter Biden laptop story before the 2020 election.



Rep. Dan Goldman claimed at the hearing there is no evidence the FBI pressured Twitter to censor “lawful” speech.  
C-SPAN

The New York Times and the Washington Post have not written one word about this hearing at which Democrat members of Congress tried to intimidate a journalist into revealing his sources.

## ID crisis

2. The Federal Trade Commission demanded that Twitter hand over a list of journalists who have accessed the Twitter Files.

In a campaign of harassment against Twitter which started as soon as Elon Musk took over the platform, the FTC sent 12 letters to Twitter making more than 350 demands.

On Dec. 13, days after Taibbi published the first of the Twitter Files, the FTC demanded Twitter “identify all journalists” to whom Twitter has granted access to its files.



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In a letter to the commission last week Republicans Ted Cruz and Jim Jordan, the House Judiciary Chairman, said the FTC's demand "represents a government inquiry into First Amendment-protected activity . . . the federal government demanding that a private company reveal the names of the journalists who are engaged in reporting about matters of public interest, including potential government misconduct."

It is an outrageous incursion into press freedom.

But, again, the mainstream media couldn't care less.

3. The Senate singled out and threatened a journalist, Tucker Carlson, for practicing journalism by airing unseen footage of the J6 Capitol riot given to him by GOP House leader Kevin McCarthy.

Democratic Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and his Republican counterpart Mitch McConnell came together as one to condemn Carlson and his employer Fox News as a threat to democracy. They didn't say the footage was fake or explain why it shouldn't be seen. We just must take their word that showing it to the American people is "shameful" and a "mistake."



Tucker Carlson was condemned by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell for releasing footage of the January 6 Capitol riot.

Fox News

J6 was supposed to be the worst attack on democracy since the civil war, according to the president.

Yet we are not allowed to see the full picture of what happened that day, only what Democrats and the partisan J6 committee have curated.

The real fear of those in power is that the public might reach conclusions which deviate from the official narrative. So they shoot the messenger.

## Defending censorship

4. Democrats tried to stop legislation that bans government officials from censoring Americans by calling it the “Putin Protection Act.”

The “Protecting Speech from Government Interference Act” introduced Thursday by Republican House Oversight Committee chairman James Comer prevents any government employee from “using their official authority to influence . . . a third party . . . to censor speech,” as happened when Twitter censored our laptop story.



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The bill passed along party lines, but not before Democrats like Dan Goldman claimed that it gave Vladimir Putin a “red carpet to interfere in our elections.”

“They want Putin and Xi to run free over our platforms,” ranted Rep. Jamie Raskin in a bizarre speech. “And the whole justification for it is their silly obsession with Hunter Biden’s laptop.”

Most of these Democrats are lawyers and yet they need a remedial lesson on the First Amendment.