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FREEDOMISM

Randomly generated opinions

Historically, the Internet has been a totally uncensored communications format. Unlike television and radio, two mediums that are widely suppressed by numerous countries, the Internet is free of almost any restrictions whatsoever, its only interference usually being child pornography cleansing (which is, of course, completely necessary). However, in recent years there have been an increasing amount of efforts, in the United States and other Western nations, to censor the Internet of "objectionable" material that some may find offensive, even though this data is not considered illegal within the scope of most free speech laws. Most of these proposed policies are directed at protecting children from viewing porn — which is a noble effort — but there are much less restrictive and more cost-effective ways to do this. The Internet must remain untouched by any government. It is to be used as the ultimate human network, a place where everyone is welcome to exchange ideas, information and be entertained. Just because one group of people finds something distasteful does not mean that the entire Internet must be censored for every person.

Creating a national internet filter in any country is extremely difficult to do, as there are multiple factors that arise when creating it. Since the Internet is almost entirely privately-owned, there will be ISPs (Internet Service Providers) and web-based corporations (such as Google) who will oppose such policies. Many of these companies take a strong position against censorship of the Internet, believing it a violation of international human rights agreements (which it technically is). There are competent hackers and many Internet organizations that have the capability to fight against censorship efforts by taking down government websites and infiltrating servers, which has already occurred in Australia as backlash against an unpopular mandatory ISP filtering policy that blocks certain websites within the nation. In general, Internet censorship is not a popular policy in most countries, and in most cases these efforts are deemed in violation of either a constitution or human rights treaty and defeated. Only in Australia, the one industrialized nation that lacks a list of fundamental rights in its Constitution, is censorship in a Western country actually legal and ongoing. Many Australians — some polls suggest up to *96%* of them[1] — are opposed to the Internet filtering ideas pushed by socially conservative Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (who represents the socially left-wing Labor Party, ironically). Fortunately, the policy has not yet been passed by Australia's parliament, overshadowed by other larger issues, but remains a looming threat to the free speech rights of Australians.

The alternative solution (one that has proven to be more effective[2]) is user installed, optional internet-filtering software that usually comes packaged with antivirus programs and some operating systems. This software provides parents with full control over what their children see on the Internet and what they don't. Instead of forcing the same restrictions on every person — including adults who don't need censorship at all — website blocking can be limited to one computer, and the settings on each computer can be customized instead of one national, mandatory setting that can't be changed. Personal filtering software also saves the government millions of dollars that, instead of going to a large, inefficient and easily exploitable internet "firewall", can go to programs that actually do something necessary and resourceful. There is no good reason to censor the internet nationally that can't be overruled by an even better reason *not* to.

The Internet should be free for everyone to access. It has become such a large part of modern society that we can't imagine out lives without it. The world wide web provides a seemingly inexhaustible amount of content, some good and some bad. Even if some of us are disturbed by it, everyone has the right to view it. Letting our governments censor the Internet would drag us down to the level of China, North Korea and Iran — countries that we despise, yet sometimes model our own laws after. We should act better than them. We should let the people choose what they want to see. It's not the job of government to decide what's good and bad for everyone. That's what freedom of speech is based on, after all.

1. "Hungrybeast: 80% of Australians want mandatory internet censorship? REALLY? » mgk: Machine Gun Keyboard." *mgk: Machine Gun Keyboard*. N.p., 11 Feb. 2010. Web. 1 May 2010. <http://machinegunkeyboard.com/?p=695>.

2. "Ln: Australian Government Mandatory ISP Internet Filtering / Blocking / Censorship Plan 2010 [Page 1]." *Libertus.net*. N.p., 20 Feb. 2010. Web. 2 May 2010. <libertus.net/censor/isp-blocking/au-govplan.html>.