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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. _____

Condemning attempts to use Federal regulatory power or litigation to suppress lawful speech, particularly speech critical of a political party or the President of the United States, and warning against the rise of authoritarianism.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. ANSARI submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on _____

RESOLUTION

Condemning attempts to use Federal regulatory power or litigation to suppress lawful speech, particularly speech critical of a political party or the President of the United States, and warning against the rise of authoritarianism.

Whereas freedom of speech and freedom of the press are foundational principles of the United States, enshrined in the First Amendment to the Constitution and by the Founders of this country;

Whereas independent journalists, commentators, comedians, and media outlets have historically played a vital role in holding those in power accountable, regardless of political party;

Whereas the use of indirect or direct government power to silence criticism of a political party or the President of the United States undermines democratic norms and chills public discourse;

Whereas authoritarians and authoritarian regimes throughout history have sought to control or co-opt media, silence dissent, and weaponize regulatory agencies to punish critics, eroding civil liberties and undermining democracy from within;

Whereas efforts to pressure the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), or to bring politically motivated lawsuits, as tools to threaten or punish media figures for their criticism of elected officials or satire mirror tactics used by authoritarian governments to intimidate and silence critics;

Whereas the Trump Administration and President Donald John Trump have issued public calls to use the awesome power of the Federal Government to investigate, fine, or otherwise penalize media figures and networks critical of the President, silencing free speech and echoing authoritarian tactics;

Whereas late-night television host Jimmy Kimmel, who has been an outspoken critic of the Trump Administration, was taken off the air indefinitely following FCC Chair Brendan Carr threatening coercive government action against the Walt Disney Company and American Broadcasting Companies, Inc. (ABC) for Kimmel's remarks;

Whereas major law firms have reportedly been enlisted to file or threaten lawsuits against networks or personalities whose programming is critical of former President Trump, further chilling free expression;

Whereas the firing or forced removal of media personalities under political pressure can have a chilling effect on dissent and signal a dangerous slide toward authoritarian practices rather than democratic accountability; and

Whereas maintaining a free and open press is essential to a healthy democracy and to public accountability, and the erosion of this freedom has historically been a precursor to the rise of authoritarianism and the decline of democratic institutions: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) condemns the use of regulatory agencies, in-
3 cluding the Federal Communications Commission,
4 and the threat or filing of lawsuits as tools to sup-
5 press, intimidate, or punish lawful speech critical of
6 any political party or the President of the United
7 States;

8 (2) warns that such practices echo the tactics
9 of authoritarian regimes and pose a serious threat to
10 the democratic traditions and constitutional free-
11 doms of the United States;

12 (3) reaffirms its commitment to upholding the
13 First Amendment and protecting the freedom of the
14 press and freedom of expression for all individuals,
15 regardless of political viewpoint;

16 (4) calls upon all public officials, regardless of
17 party affiliation, to refrain from using their positions
18 of power to pressure media organizations or individ-

1 uals into censoring or silencing speech protected by
2 the Constitution;

3 (5) urges the Department of Justice, the Fed-
4 eral Communications Commission, and other rel-
5 evant agencies to ensure that their policies and prac-
6 tices safeguard free expression and do not become
7 tools of political retribution; and

8 (6) affirms that a vibrant, independent media
9 and the ability of Americans to criticize their gov-
10 ernment are indispensable to the preservation of
11 democratic governance and to preventing the rise of
12 authoritarianism.