

Internet Censorship

It's only proposed legislation, but it can give you an idea of what may be coming down the cyberhighway if the voters don't toss some of the socialists in Congress out onto the pavement in November 2010.

As usual, the politicians give their legislation a name that would prompt any reasonable person to say, "What a good idea! Now, who could have a problem with that?" Thus, Congresswoman Linda Sanchez (D-CA) introduced the "Megan Meier Cyberbullying Prevention Act." Who could possibly be in favor of "cyberbullying?" (Probably only those mean conservatives who listen to Rush Limbaugh and watch the Fox News Channel.)

Luckily, Ms. Sanchez has not yet learned the writing style of Senator Max Baucus (D-MT), whose health care legislation required only 1,502 pages. Sanchez needed only two pages for her bill—but she certainly packed a lot of wallop into them. Read it below, then jump back up here. (Here's a hint: the "good stuff" is in red.)

Can you spell C-E-N-S-O-R-S-H-I-P?

Although the bill's language is straightforward, let's out it into plain English so that even liberals will understand: If you write something in an email or a blog on the Internet that causes "substantial emotional distress to a person," you could be imprisoned for up to two years.

Leaving aside the question of who would decide what constitutes "substantial emotional distress" (I would venture a guess that Obama will hire an "Emotional Distress Czar"), my conservative estimate is that the United States would need approximately 300 million prison cells to house all the people who violate Ms. Sanchez's wonderful piece of legislation.

Make that 300,000,001—with Ms. Sanchez as inmate number one. I know I have been caused "substantial emotional distress" just reading her bill over the Internet. How about you?

Don Fredrick
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111th CONGRESS
1st Session
H. R. 1966

To amend title 18, United States Code, with respect to cyberbullying.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

April 2, 2009

Ms. LINDA T. SANCHEZ of California (for herself, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. YARMUTH, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, Mrs. CAPPS, Mr. BISHOP of New York, Mr. BRALEY of Iowa, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. HARE, Mr. HIGGINS, Mr. CLAY, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. COURTNEY, and Mr. KIRK) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To amend title 18, United States Code, with respect to cyberbullying.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the 'Megan Meier Cyberbullying Prevention Act'.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

- (1) Four out of five of United States children aged 2 to 17 live in a home where either they or their parents access the Internet.
- (2) Youth who create Internet content and use social networking sites are more likely to be targets of cyberbullying.
- (3) Electronic communications provide anonymity to the perpetrator and the potential for widespread public distribution, potentially making them severely dangerous and cruel to youth.
- (4) Online victimizations are associated with emotional distress and other psychological problems, including depression.
- (5) Cyberbullying can cause psychological harm, including depression; negatively impact academic performance, safety, and the well-being of children in school; force children to change schools; and in some cases lead to extreme violent behavior, including murder and suicide.
- (6) Sixty percent of mental health professionals who responded to the Survey of Internet Mental Health Issues report having treated at least one

patient with a problematic Internet experience in the previous five years;
54 percent of these clients were 18 years of age or younger.

SEC. 3. CYBERBULLYING.

(a) In General- Chapter 41 of title 18, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

`Sec. 881. Cyberbullying

`(a) Whoever transmits in interstate or foreign commerce **any communication, with the intent to coerce, intimidate, harass, or cause substantial emotional distress to a person, using electronic means** to support severe, repeated, and hostile behavior, shall be fined under this title **or imprisoned not more than two years**, or both.

`(b) As used in this section--

`(1) the term `communication' means the electronic transmission, between or among points specified by the user, of information of the user's choosing, without change in the form or content of the information as sent and received; and

`(2) the term `electronic means' means any equipment dependent on electrical power to access an information service, **including email, instant messaging, blogs, websites, telephones, and text messages.**'.

(b) Clerical Amendment- The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 41 of title 18, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

`881. Cyberbullying.'.