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“You can vote at 18. You can serve in the military at 18. You should be able to buy cigarettes at 18.”

**STATE REP. JIM LYONS (R-18TH)
MASSACHUSETTS HOUSE**

Legislative Updates

Brett Kavanaugh Sworn in as Supreme Court Justice

ON OCT. 6, the Senate voted 50 to 48 to confirm Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court, after a highly combative confirmation fight inflamed by allegations of sexual assault against Kavanaugh.

The Senate vote was consistently interrupted by protesters shouting from the gallery, causing Vice President Mike Pence, who was presiding over the confirmation, to call for order. Protesters also descended on the Capitol to express their dissatisfaction with the confirmation.

Following Senate confirmation, Kavanaugh was sworn in at a private ceremony followed by a public ceremony in the White House on Oct. 7. Chief Justice John Roberts administered the constitutional oath, and retired Justice Anthony Kennedy administered the judicial oath.

“I applaud and congratulate the U.S. Senate for confirming our great nominee, Judge Brett Kavanaugh, to the United States Supreme Court,” wrote President Donald Trump in a tweet.

Nikki Haley Resigns as United Nations Ambassador

ON OCT. 9, President Donald Trump announced that U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley has resigned and will leave her post by the end of the year. “It has been the honor of a lifetime,” Haley said.

It is not immediately clear what prompted the move. Speaking from the Oval Office, Haley said she had no “personal reasons” for leaving but felt someone else should take the role.

Trump praised Haley, saying she has done an “incredible job” and is “somebody who gets it.” He said he hoped she would come back to the administration in another capacity, adding, “You can have your pick.”

Trump says he will name Haley’s successor in the near future.



THIS MONTH:

Should the minimum legal sale age for tobacco products be raised to 21?



“Tobacco has serious health consequences, especially for young people who are more susceptible to addiction.”

**REP. DIANA DEGETTE
(D-CO)**

THE ISSUE: In July, Massachusetts became the sixth state to raise its minimum legal sale age (MLSA) for tobacco products to 21. This new legislation will prevent retailers from selling tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, to anyone under age 21 in Massachusetts.

“When teens start smoking, studies show that they often become smokers for life,” said Massachusetts State Rep. Kate Hogan (D-3rd). “Youth are particularly susceptible to nicotine addiction and fall victim every day to the damaging effects nicotine has on the developing brain, heart, and lungs.”

Under federal law, it is illegal for a retailer to sell tobacco products to persons younger than age 18. However, there is a movement afoot to raise the minimum age for buying tobacco products to 21. On Nov. 7, 2017, Rep. Diana DeGette (D-CO) introduced a bill in the U.S. House of Representatives called the Tobacco to 21 Act, which would prohibit the sale of tobacco products to anyone under 21. DeGette’s bill was referred to committee.

In the absence of federal legislation to raise the smoking age, a growing number of local governments are acting on their own. So far, six states — California, Hawaii, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Oregon — have raised the tobacco age to 21, along with more than 350 localities, including New York City, Chicago, San Antonio, Boston, Cleveland, and Minneapolis.

THE CONTROVERSY: Momentum is now building across the country to raise the MLSA to 21 to prevent more youth from initiating tobacco use. The push for change continues as e-cigarette use, or vaping, among teens has become much more popular. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2017, 3.6 million middle and high school students used some form of tobacco.

Since most smokers begin the habit before age 19, supporters say hiking the legal age to 21 will save lives as well as cut medical costs for states. But opponents say raising the legal age to 21 would hurt small business retail sales, reduce tax revenue, and violate the personal freedom of young adults who are legally able to vote and join the military at age 18.

THOSE FOR raising the minimum legal sale age (MLSA) for tobacco products to 21 say young lives are at stake. Preventing or delaying teens and young adults from experimenting with smoking would stop many of them from ever taking up the habit. Tobacco has serious health consequences, especially for young people.

THOSE AGAINST raising the MLSA to 21 say raising the smoking age hurts small businesses, including convenience stores, and violates the personal freedom of young adults who are legally able to vote and join the military at 18. If you can die for this country at age 18, you should be able to purchase tobacco at a gas station.



TEEN VAPING was declared an epidemic recently by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which says statistics show the growing popularity of e-cigarettes among teens. These products, which may be packaged in sleek, high-tech devices, have become increasingly popular among teens, despite being harmful to the developing brain. Experts blame advertising that targets teens. “Advertising can bring the horse to water,” said Brian King, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “The flavors will get them to drink. And the nicotine will keep them coming back for more.”

“I shudder when I hear the words ‘regulate the internet.’ I don’t want to do that.”

SEN. ANGUS KING
(I-ME)

THE ISSUE: On Sept. 5, the Senate Intelligence Committee held a hearing concerning foreign meddling on social media platforms. Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey and Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg both attended and answered senators’ questions. Although Alphabet (Google’s parent company) was also invited, the company did not attend.

THE CONTROVERSY: One reason legislators are leery of regulating big tech companies is the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees free speech. If government is able to regulate speech on YouTube, what would stop government from curtailing the freedom of expression of citizens?

The September hearing was one of a series of hearings held over the past year. Tech executives have traveled to Washington, D.C. multiple times to testify before Congress, including 10 hours of questioning of Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg over two days in April.

Others point out that regulation is needed. After all, Facebook sold political advertisements to Russians and Twitter allowed Russian bots on its platform. Ordinary media would not allow this because they are regulated. Also, the tardy reactions of Facebook and Twitter show they are not capable of self-regulation.

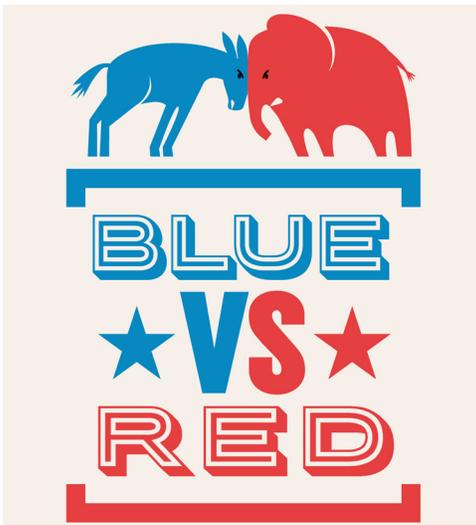
The question on the minds of legislators is what should be done about foreign countries’ use of social media platforms to manipulate public opinion in the U.S.? Should the federal government regulate tech companies like Facebook, Twitter and Google?

THOSE FOR regulating tech companies say social media and search sites need to be regulated just as other media such as TV and radio are regulated. Tech platforms not only have few safeguards to prevent the deliberate manipulation of information, but they also have financial interests in maintaining the status quo.

“All the evidence this Committee has seen to date suggests that the platform companies — namely, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Google and YouTube — still have a lot of work to do,” said Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA).

THOSE AGAINST such regulation say the federal government should not interfere with people’s First Amendment rights. Further, tech companies must move fast to stay innovative and regulation slows things down. If online sites are regulated, federal government agencies will end up deciding what goes in your Facebook posts or Google search.

There is a bipartisan consensus that something must be done to stop foreign campaigns to misinform and divide Americans politically. The question is what?



POLITICAL ADS on television, news print and the radio are currently required to disclose who has paid for the advertisement under the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971. But this is not a requirement for online ads. On Oct. 19, 2017, legislation called the Honest Ads Act was introduced in both the Senate and House. The act would amend the 1971 law to make “reasonable efforts” to ensure ads are not purchased “directly or indirectly” by foreign countries. The legislation would regulate campaign advertisements on online platforms such as Facebook and Google.

Smoking Age

- Evidence shows that nicotine dependence is not correlated with younger ages of smoking initiation.
 - True
 - False
- Smoking kills more people than _____.
 - Alcohol and illegal drugs
 - Car accidents
 - Murders and suicides
 - All of the above combined
- In 2015, which state was the first to raise the minimum legal sale age for buying tobacco products to 21?
 - California
 - Hawaii
 - Oregon
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the racial/ethnic group that has the highest rate of tobacco use among U.S. middle and high school students is _____.
 - American Indian/Alaska Native
 - White
 - Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
 - Black
- Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S.
 - True
 - False

Tech Regulations

- The Russian government interfered in the 2016 U.S. presidential election in order to increase political instability in the U.S. and to damage Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign by bolstering which other candidate(s)?
 - Donald Trump
 - Bernie Sanders
 - Jill Stein
 - All of the above
- The Honest Ads Act (S. 1989) was introduced in the Senate to promote regulation of campaign advertisements online. Which of the following senators was not a sponsor of this bill?
 - Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN)
 - Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC)
 - Sen. Angus King (I-ME)
 - Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA)
- The companies that drive a large amount of growth in technology are sometimes referred to as GAFTA, an acronym for Google, Apple, Facebook, Twitter and Amazon.
 - True
 - False
- In March 2018, Cambridge Analytica harvested the sensitive data of _____ Facebook users without their explicit permission.
 - 50 million
 - 87 million
 - 22 billion



This newsletter is a publication of the **Student Governmental Affairs Program (SGAP)**, a nonprofit organization located at:

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Issue 1 Smoking Age



YES: STATE REP. PAUL MCMURTRY (D-11TH) MASSACHUSETTS HOUSE



“Simply changing [the MLSA from] 18 to 21 in our current state law will have a profound and lasting impact for generations to come [by]

saving thousands of lives and billions of dollars. By raising the age to purchase to 21, we eliminate smoking from the high school social setting and give teenagers time to make a more informed decision about whether or not to begin the oftentimes deadly habit of smoking. Small businesses or convenience stores may experience a slight decrease in sales, but the loss will be replaced by potential health care cost savings.”

Should the minimum legal sale age for tobacco products be raised to 21?



NO: STATE REP. MARC LOMBARDO (R-22ND) MASSACHUSETTS HOUSE



“We allow 18-year-olds to fight in our military, vote in elections, operate firearms, operate motor vehicles, and get abortions. If these are

acceptable actions for 18-year-old adults, then government shouldn’t stop an adult from buying tobacco. If you can die for this country, then you should be able to choose if you want to purchase tobacco. I’m not convinced that taking away the right to purchase tobacco makes sense. In addition, the research fails to show that taking away the ability to purchase tobacco from adults will make significant impacts on stopping under-aged smoking.”

Issue 2 Tech Regulations



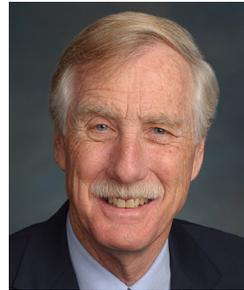
YES: SEN. MARK WARNER (D-VA)



“The era of the Wild West in social media is coming to an end. The size and reach of [these] platforms demand that we, as policy-makers, do our job, to ensure proper

oversight, transparency and protections for American users and for our democratic institutions. We should be mindful to adopt policies that do not simply entrench the existing dominant platforms. These are not just challenges for our politics or our democracy. These threats can affect our economy, our financial system, and other parts of our lives.”

Should the federal government regulate tech companies?



NO: SEN. ANGUS KING (I-ME)

“I don’t think it’s appropriate, or will be effective, to try to legislate what Facebook can have on its pages. I think a much more effective way to handle this is to

have Facebook itself, which I understand is its policy, to say we are not going to carry these kind of messages. I shudder when I hear the words ‘regulate the internet.’ I don’t want to do that, but there may be things that we can do that could be helpful. Things that we might be able to do without violating the First Amendment.”



Dear Member of Congress:

I am a student receiving information from the Student Governmental Affairs Program. Here are my opinions on these issues. I would greatly appreciate any response you might like to share.

1) Should the minimum legal sale age for tobacco products be raised to 21?

Comments: _____

Yes No Undecided

2) Should the federal government regulate tech companies?

Comments: _____

Yes No Undecided

Student Name

School Name

School Address

Nationwide Student Voting Results from the Last SGAP Newsletter

| | Yes | No | Undecided |
|--|-----|-----|-----------|
| <p>1) Should Congress raise the federal minimum wage?</p> <p>Yes: "Families working on minimum wage will continue to struggle without a higher wage." "There are too many people living below the poverty line."</p> <p>No: "Business will raise prices to make up for additional labor costs. Cost of living will rise even higher!" "Wages should be a state issue."</p> | 30% | 64% | 6% |
| <p>2) Should the U.S. weaken its fuel-efficiency standards for cars?</p> <p>Yes: "We need to focus on Ethanol, which helps our farmers." "In order to help Americans save money and spend it on safer cars."</p> <p>No: "Though initial car prices would be higher, the amount spent on gas will decrease, lessening costs over time." "Clean air is important because we don't want to be like China."</p> | 40% | 49% | 11% |

This ballot was prepared by the Student Governmental Affairs Program (SGAP), a nonprofit, nonpartisan student civics program, located at: 2435 N. Central Expressway, Suite 300, Richardson, TX 75080 | Phone: 1-800-806-7427 | Email: civics@sgap.org | Website: www.sgap.org