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## **Thirty-four Republican and conservative co-sponsors host public event on “Free Speech, Hate Speech, & Censorship: Winning the 2020 Elections”**

**CUMBERLAND, Maine (August 15, 2019)** - Thirty-four Republican and conservative groups and co-sponsors hosted a public event on the topic “Free Speech, Hate Speech, & Censorship: Winning the 2020 Elections” at the West Cumberland Community Hall in Cumberland, Maine on Thursday, August 15, 2019, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The event was organized by the Gray and Cumberland Republican Town Committees, with twenty-two Republican town committees from Cumberland County joining as co-sponsors, along with nine additional organizations, as well as Republican State Representative Sue Austin from Gray. The event was packed, with between sixty and seventy attendees.

Peter Falkenberg Brown, the Chairman of the Gray Republican Committee, a writer, author, and the host of the “Love, Freedom, & the World” YouTube channel began the evening with an overview of the decline of freedom in 2019, followed by an analysis of the Marxist and Leftist forces behind the suppression of free speech and the methods they use to sway public opinion toward socialism. He stated:

First, liberals and conservatives need to join together and affirm that *we want to be free* and that living a life of freedom requires thought and free-flowing dialogue. Totalitarians don't like freedom of thought at all. In the novel *1984*, George Orwell wrote: “Orthodoxy means not thinking—not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness.”

Charlie Honkonen, the President of the Maine Federation of College Republicans and a Senior at the University of Maine in Orono, spoke second. He addressed the issue of campus indoctrination and censorship, and stated:

If you walk into a classroom on Anthropology . . . and praise Karl Marx, you praise the ideals of Socialism, of Stalin, of Lenin, you're applauded, you're given an “A.” The professor says, “. . . great work.” If you walk in with a simple, red hat, that says the most simple words, “Make America Great Again,” you are called out by the professor, you are called hateful, you are asked to take that hat off. . . . These are experiences that have happened to our members on campus.

Matt Gagnon was the final speaker of the evening. Gagnon is the CEO of the Maine Heritage Policy Center, a columnist for the *Bangor Daily News*, and a co-host of the WGAN Morning News show. He recommended the market-based approach to pushing back against social media censorship. In his talk, he stated:

You, as a market, can do something about that. You can make your voice heard. Walk away, and make them feel immense financial pain. . . . One of the things that's been a problem in this market is that someone who can create an alternative to what we see today doesn't really today feel like there's a market for something else. But there sure would be if fifty or sixty million conservatives stopped using the platform.

Gagnon added:

My biggest problem with most tech policy solutions, particularly the Section 230 issue, is that I do not want a bureaucrat in Washington, DC deciding whose speech is good, who gets protected, who does not get protected, and the thing about it that scares me the most is what happens when President Elizabeth Warren and a Senate majority of sixty-two Democrats, which someday will be elected. . . . if you hand over the power to start regulating your speech on the Internet because you wanted them to protect you in the first place, you are just asking for really, really bad things to happen to you.

There was a Q&A session after each speaker, and more Q&A at the end. The audience was engaged and lively. The event was the third public speech event hosted by the Gray Republican Committee in 2019, and will be followed by additional events later this year and next. For more information, please visit <https://grayrepublicans.org>.

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