

## What's Causing America's Widespread Worsening?

**By Scott Cleland**

How can so many things be going more wrong in America at the same time?

Only one cause-effect dynamic is as universal, purposeful, time and technology coincident, and scale, scope, and reach similar. That cause-effect is 1990's U.S. Internet unaccountability policy in [Section 230](#) of the 1996 Communications Decency [Act](#), its Internet intermediary immunity law, and its evident outcomes.

It causes worsening because approved anarchy online empowers bad actors with impunity. It's widespread because everyone uses the Internet for everything everywhere for life, work, and play. It's lasting given five Administrations, fourteen Congresses, and seventeen Supreme Court Justices, together, have neglected to protect people from harms and crimes online since 1996.

America's approved anarchy online has worsened the national outcomes of all six purposes of the U.S. Constitution: "... *form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty ...*"

America has become less united, just, peaceful, secure, flourishing, and blessed since the imposition of 1996 U.S. Internet unaccountability policy without consent of the governed.

1. **Less united.** Social media increasingly [polarizes](#) Americans. From 2000 to 2020, republican and democrat partisanship has skyrocketed 160% per [Pew Research](#).
2. **Less just.** There is no justice online because there is no rule-of-law, rights, duty of care, or access to justice online. Approved anarchy online regresses America to primitivism, where people and [minors](#) are defenseless prey for predators. Cybercrime is out-of-control. Only [.3%](#) is prosecuted.
3. **Less peaceful.** Social media [facilitated](#) America's only unpeaceful transfer of power. Algorithms [promote](#) 'anger' five times more than 'likes.' Social media fame has incited a 300% increase in U.S. mass shootings from thirty-three 1982-2002 to a hundred 2002-2022 [per Statista](#).
4. **Less Secure:** Most Americans [are victims](#) of cyberattacks, cyberbullying, or cybercrime. Surrendering sovereignty online aids and abets our adversaries, [China](#), [Russia](#), and [cybercriminals](#), with [impunity](#). [China](#) has [hacked](#) and [stolen](#) many of America's most valuable secrets. [Russia disrupts](#) America with impunity via ransomware, cybercrime, and interference.
5. **Less Flourishing:** Offline a person is a living citizen with humanity and rights; online a person is a non-living thing, a product or data without humanity or rights. Social media is [causing](#) teen depression and suicides. 100,000 Americans were murdered last year from fentanyl poisoning because 97% of pharmacies online are

illegal. From 2000-2020, U.S. GDP's average annual growth rate ~halved, compared to 1960-2000. 1996 communications law to promote competition over monopoly has perversely promoted much more monopolization.

6. **Less Blessed:** There is no liberty, equality, or justice in anarchy. U.S. Internet unaccountability policy rejects the Golden Rule of 'treat others as you want to be treated,' that most religions and ethical traditions believe in some form. It has been replaced with a Rotten Rule of 'do what you want to others.' This approved amorality demoralizes. From 2000 to 2020, U.S. adult church membership fell 33% from ~70% 1940-2000 to 47% in 2020, per Gallup.

Knowing the cause of America's chaos quo, is knowing the cure for America's chaos quo.

The solutions are either restoring constitutional authority over the U.S. Internet in U.S. policy, or repeal of Section 230. Both deliver same rules and rights offline-online, illegal offline is illegal online. Equal protection under the law.

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