

# Voices & Opinion

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**SUN SENTINEL EDITORIAL**

## Allow access to smartphones' hidden radios

When Hurricane Irma wiped out power and cell phone service, a hidden feature in our smartphones could have helped Floridians stay informed.

But Apple refuses to flip the switch that would let the iPhone work like an FM radio.

Other tech companies have resisted, too, preferring we use their apps, downloads and streaming services instead. Still, the makers of Android and Samsung phones have relented, even if the feature remains unknown to many.

As a result, many smartphone users in the nation's third most-populous state couldn't hear the emergency alerts, storm updates and other critical information communicated after Hurricane Irma knocked out power to millions.

Instead, we were advised to buy battery-operated radios in advance. Even if you could find and afford one, good luck finding the batteries to run them.

A better answer resides in the palm of our hand.

Smartphones contain an inner switch that lets them receive over-the-air analog signals from local radio stations. In other countries, including Cuba, manufacturers are required to flip the switch on. But in this country, Apple rules. And it prefers to sell

the iPhone with the FM radio button switched off.

Apple's resistance is unacceptable. No company's bottom line should stand in the way of Floridians receiving life-saving information. Given our nation's dependence on cell phones, the smartphone's FM switch is a public safety issue. If Cuba can make manufacturers flip the switch, surely we can.

For years, the National Association of Broadcasters has called for smartphone manufacturers and mobile service providers to enable the FM radio chip. In the face of resistance, it helped develop a free app — called NextRadio — that lets you access FM radio on your phones, either through WiFi in streaming mode or without WiFi in FM mode.

For the FM mode to work, the chip must be activated and the mobile company provider must allow its use.

Android, Samsung, Sprint, AT&T, T-Mobile and other telecommunication companies have come onboard. Verizon supports the feature on some, but not all, of its smartphones, according to the broadcasters' association.

But Apple, the industry's big dog, stands opposed.

FEMA, the nation's Federal Emergency

Management Agency, says the switch could greatly improve communications during disasters. Cell phones going dark was a big problem during Hurricane Sandy in 2012, then-FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate said in 2014.

"I don't think people realize how vulnerable they get," said Fugate, who once led Florida's emergency management team. "When the cell systems went down or the data was overloaded, they couldn't get information."

In February, Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai urged mobile phone companies to activate the FM radio chip in smartphones, but said the FCC doesn't have the authority to require it, the Washington Post reported.

The telecommunications industry shouldn't need a new law or regulation to do the right thing.

But companies don't always act in people's best interests. If they did, we wouldn't need to regulate what someone may put in our water, add to our food or broadcast over the air, for example.

If Apple refuses to switch, Congress must act. And given the communications black hole created by Irma, Florida's congressional delegation should take the lead.

On Tuesday, as victims of Hurricanes Irma and Harvey tried to salvage homes amid lingering flood damage and power outages, Apple CEO Tim Cook unveiled a new line of iPhones, including a model that costs \$1,000.

Cook took a moment to acknowledge the storm victims and pledge his fundraising support.

"You are in our thoughts," he said. "We send you our strength. You are in our prayers."

Beyond prayers, Floridians need our iPhones to receive FM broadcasts.

Do the right thing, Mr. Cook. Flip the switch. Lives depend on it.

Our app and streaming addictions won't disappear if we have the option of listening to FM radio. That's why our earbuds are plugged into an iPhone, not a Walkman.

We paid for these radio chips when we bought our pricey Apple phones. It's time to let us turn them on.

*Editorials are the opinion of the Sun Sentinel Editorial Board and written by one of its members or a designee. The Editorial Board consists of Editorial Page Editor Rosemary O'Hara, Elana Simms, Andy Reid, Deborah Ramirez and Editor-in-Chief Howard Saltz.*

**ANOTHER VIEWPOINT**

## Bipartisan effort could end online child sex trafficking

BY JOHN M. SIMPSON



One victim of sex trafficking began her ordeal when she was 15. She was sold through the website Backpage.com for sex to men across Massachusetts, New York, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Maine. She was raped over 600 times over the course of four months.

Another victim was sex trafficked through Backpage for three years — starting when she was 14 — in Massachusetts and Connecticut. Over those three years, she was raped thousands of times. A third victim was sex trafficked when she was 15 in Massachusetts and Florida.

A film, "I Am Jane Doe," documents the struggle of Backpage's victims to hold the website accountable. A U.S. Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations staff report shows that Backpage.com aids and abets sex traffickers of minors.

The victims took their cases to court, but the court ruled the cynical, exploitative website is shielded by a key Internet law, which is staunchly defended by the tech industry.

The current interpretation of that law, Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, enables rogue websites like Backpage.com to use it as a shield. This interpretation, pushed by the tech industry, keeps child sex trafficking alive and allows websites like Backpage to avoid accountability to victims and their families. Now, finally, there is bipartisan congressional action underway to change that, clarify the law's intent, and enable these exploitative websites to be held accountable.

The bipartisan Senate bill, S. 1693 — the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act of 2017 — was recently introduced by Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH), and has 27 co-sponsors, including both Sen. Marco Rubio and Sen. Bill Nelson. In the House of Representatives, Rep. Ann Wagner's (R-MO) H.R. 1865, the Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act of 2017, has 111 co-sponsors, including seven Florida representatives. They are: Gus M. Bilirakis (R-12), Charlie Crist (D-13), Alcee Hastings (D-20), Thomas Rooney (R-17), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-27), Dennis Ross, (R-15) and Frederica S. Wilson (D-24).

### Internet freedom must not come at the expense of children who are sex trafficked.

Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act provides that a website can't be held liable for actions by third parties. Court decisions have expanded the Sec. 230 protection to shield the likes of Backpage. While abusive websites that facilitate sex trafficking hide behind the cloak of CDA

Sec. 230, too many in the tech industry blindly and reflexively claim that needed amendments would undermine Internet freedom. Big Tech giants like Google, Facebook, Twitter and Amazon, more concerned about their bottom lines than the greater good, are fighting any attempt to even tweak Sec. 230 so that rogue websites like Backpage can be held accountable.

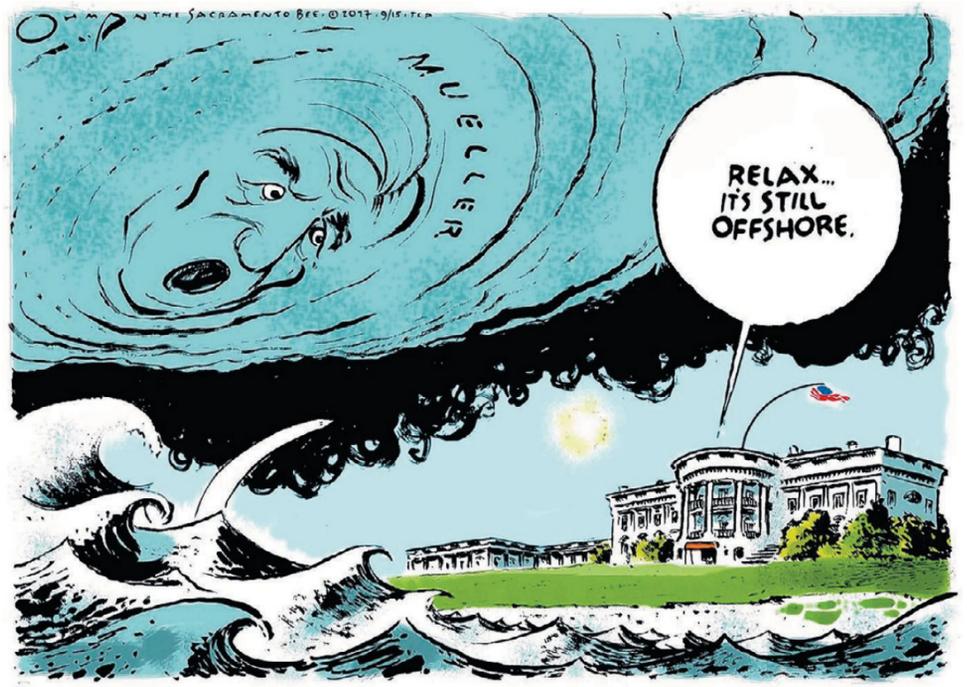
Many tech companies and other defenders of CDA Section 230 claim it promotes and protects free expression on the Internet, but the bills' narrow amendments go after criminal activity, not content. And, finally, the solid wall of tech opposition is beginning to crack. Tech giant Oracle; CoStar Group, publishers of Apartments.com; and 21st Century Fox have endorsed narrowly amending Section 230.

Internet freedom must not come at the expense of children who are sex trafficked. Just as the First Amendment does not allow you to shout "fire" in a crowded movie house, or to assist hit men and drug dealers in their criminal activity, CDA Section 230 must not be allowed to protect a criminal business that is built on sex trafficking.

This exploitation and abuse must stop. Congress is taking the necessary action. However, the tech industry and its surrogate groups are going all out to stop it.

The bipartisan efforts to amend and clarify Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act will ensure that websites that knowingly or recklessly facilitate online sex trafficking can be held liable so that victims can get justice. This bipartisan bid to amend the law could well prove to be the rare exception and actually pass in this time of gridlock in Washington. All of Florida's federal lawmakers should be on board.

*John M. Simpson is Privacy Project director for Consumer Watchdog, a nonpartisan, nonprofit public interest group. He can be reached at john@consumerwatchdog.org.*



**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

### Better infrastructure falls flat under Irma

After hurricane Wilma pounded Fort Lauderdale in 2005 (that is over a decade now), Florida Power & Light Co. stated that its infrastructure would be improved. We live a short distance from both the main power plant (which was improved, ostensibly to decrease pollution, but more likely to increase profits) and the center of the city of Fort Lauderdale.

It's Day 5 with no power post-Irma, which didn't even really hit here. Our "improved infrastructure" is an ancient telephone pole in our backyard that looks like it belongs in Nigeria, Somalia or Haiti. Upgraded infrastructure? I think not.

My new morning routine, thanks to FP&L, consists of gassing up the generator and going to wait in a gas line, taking a cold shower, and going to work. Then I get to come home and cook dinner on the grill and eat off paper plates. Thanks for the upgrade FP&L. I know I'm not alone with angst toward these monopolistic truth-benders.

**Andy Cool, Fort Lauderdale**

### Competition good for electric companies

The Florida Republican Party has virtually destroyed public education in Florida by diverting resources to private schools. The same GOP and Legislature would not countenance allowing companies to compete with FPL, which delayed restoration of my power by 17 days after Wilma, and seems determined to go at least as long after Irma.

If competition is good for education, it is good for electric companies, too.

**James Wilson, Plantation**

### Stem climate change effects with policy

Hurricane Irma has upended many people's lives, including my

own. My partner and I missed several days of work, resulting in a loss of income. Having to evacuate your home is gut-wrenching. We were fortunate this time, but many others lost everything.

Irma was one of the largest, most powerful storms in history. Scientists for years have told us that we would see an increase in the frequency and severity of storms and other extreme weather events due to climate change. The predictions are coming true and we are now living this climate change disaster.

The time is now for our leaders to address climate change by implementing carbon fee and dividend legislation. Citizens' Climate Lobby has a proposal that will place a fee on carbon but return fees paid as a dividend check to all consumers.

This is an important step to reverse the threats of climate change and one that must be taken now. Reach out to your elected officials and let them know climate change is an urgent issue.

**Robert Figueroa, Fort Lauderdale**

### Don't jump to climate change conclusions

Regarding Irma and hurricanes being caused by man, there have been much worse in past history. The Galveston Hurricane killed estimates of 6,000 to 12,000 people in 1900. Okeechobee Hurricane killed at least 2,500 people in 1928. A Louisiana hurricane killed 1,500 people in 1893. Katrina killed more than 1,500 people in 2005.

Many other scientists disagree that man has any appreciable effect on the weather, but rather climate change is caused by natural causes as it has been over thousands of years when we had much more severe warming periods and ice ages. The topic of climate change is very scientific and people jump to conclusions often without looking at all the scientific historical data rather than parts of it.

We will have very warm periods and very cold periods over the next 1,000 years regardless of man's ac-

tivities, contrary to public perception.

**Charles Laser, Deerfield Beach**

### Silver lining? Drivers heeding traffic laws

I saw a nice example of courteous drivers Wednesday, at one of Hollywood's busier intersections. Drivers coming to a complete stop, letting other drivers go ahead of them, letting other drivers make turns in front of them — the way it should be when a traffic light is not working. I was very impressed by this behavior, and I'll bet that those police officers in those three police cars parked at that intersection were impressed also.

**Bob Rosen, Hollywood**

### For delivery amid the storm — thank you

You really came through! With Irma pounding away and wreaking havoc, my carrier never missed a beat. My paper was delivered every day. With no TV and shutters closed, you have no idea how welcome that newspaper was. To my carrier and all the others who braved the storm: Thank you.

**Audrey Frieman, Pembroke Pines**

### Deaths elicit gratitude for exceptional care

I read about the deaths at the Hollywood nursing home, and I am so lucky to have been a resident at Edgewater Pointe Estates. Our management kept our services going. Culinary kept us fed with three wonderful meals a day. All our needs were taken care of.

**Vivian Epstein, Boca Raton**

**YOUR THOUGHTS?**

Send your 150-word letter to letters@sunsentinel.com. By mail: 333 SW 12th Ave., Deerfield Beach, FL 33442. Include your name, address and phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and become property of the Sun Sentinel.

HOME DELIVERY WITH UNLIMITED DIGITAL ACCESS RATES	BY CARRIER		7-day		Wed. & Sun.		Wed. & Sat. & Sun.		Thurs. & Sun.		Mon.-Fri.		Sat. & Sun.		Fri. & Sun.	
Broward County	\$12.99	\$6.99	\$4.00	\$4.99	\$6.00	\$3.65	\$4.00	\$4.99	\$6.00	\$3.65	\$4.00	\$4.99	\$6.00	\$3.65	\$4.00	\$4.99
Miami-Dade County	\$12.99	\$6.99	\$4.00	\$4.99	\$6.00	\$3.65	\$4.00	\$4.99	\$6.00	\$3.65	\$4.00	\$4.99	\$6.00	\$3.65	\$4.00	\$4.99
Palm Beach County	\$12.99	\$6.99	\$4.00	\$4.99	\$6.00	\$3.65	\$4.00	\$4.99	\$6.00	\$3.65	\$4.00	\$4.99	\$6.00	\$3.65	\$4.00	\$4.99
Monroe County	\$12.99	\$6.99	\$4.00	\$4.99	\$6.00	\$3.65	\$4.00	\$4.99	\$6.00	\$3.65	\$4.00	\$4.99	\$6.00	\$3.65	\$4.00	\$4.99