Thank you, thank you. It’s really an honor to be here. No, it really is. Standing with so many influential people I’m honored to call friends and peers.

Being a team player has always been, for me at least, a tightrope walk. It’s my greatest challenge trying to figure out when to go with the group or when to stand alone in ideological conflict. The two things that have helped to guide my decisions in these matters have always been: My faith in Christ and my Principles. I’m tempted to say my gut, but I think principles sounds a little better, wouldn’t you agree?

Keeping that in mind, when I was told to stand down regarding elements of free speech, my Principles \*pats stomach for emphasis, waits for audience to chuckle\* went off immediately.

I cannot, as a representative for so many people who put their faith in me to stand up when their rights are questioned, be silent on this matter.

When this country’s framework was set up, the very first thing that was considered was speech. The very first thing on anyone and everyone’s mind at the drafting of the Constitution of these United States was speech! Not kings and rights of succession, not commerce, not war, not judiciaries or property. Speech.

And why is that? Because what comes out of a person’s mouth goes into everyone in that vicinity’s ears and registers in their minds. Free speech is the social equivalent to free thought, and free speech gives rise to discourse that expands and grows free thought. The difference between a citizen and a subject is mental, not political. A subject is afraid to have an objectionable thought, a heated discussion, a stimulating debate. A **CITIZEN** doesn’t shun these things, they welcome them with the zeal with which a bird welcomes the sky or a tree welcomes the rain.

And that is because a **citizen** feels at home being challenged with new and differing viewpoints and ideas. A **citizen** isn’t afraid of words or notions or ideas because a **citizen** is free. A **citizen** welcomes challenging perspectives. A **subject** shrinks from it.

And now here we stand, with so many voices clamoring for restriction on what can be said and what can be discussed.

Well I’m not going along with it. I’d rather spend every single hour of every single day hearing, reading, seeing arguments that go against my own worldview rather than suppress a single perspective in the name of protecting mine, or anyone else’s, fragile feelings!

I keep hearing the same tired refrain…”the internet has changed things.” Well they’re right…the internet…it **has** changed things! It has made speech broader, more global, faster. You can argue about the most inane nonsense with someone on the other side of the world. You can rebuke and fight and criticize even the loftiest of ideals.

You know what hasn’t changed? The importance of free speech. The importance of the constitution. The difference between a citizen and a subject have never been more starkly contrasted in today’s digital age. A free man or woman can say what they want, provided it doesn’t cause actual harm to a person. A subject must guard their thoughts, guard their words, guard their sense of good and evil and right and wrong and just and unjust, all in the name of some governing body that wants to dictate how they should think and feel and speak.

I stand here today to support free speech no matter the cost, because the cost of reducing free speech is much greater, and it would be a cost our children and grandchildren would pay every single day of their lives…as subjects, not citizens.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Leo York