

Religious broadcasters complain of viewpoint censorship

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WASHINGTON (RNS) Religious content faces a "clear and present danger of censorship" from Facebook, iTunes and other new media platforms, according to a report released Thursday (Sept. 15) by National Religious Broadcasters (NRB).

"With the single exception of Twitter, all the new media platforms and services that we examined have issued written policies governing citizen users that are clearly inconsistent with the free speech values of the U.S. Constitution," according to the report, based on an 18-month study headed by NRB Senior Vice President and General Counsel Craig Parshall.

The study looked at the policies and practices of prominent "new media" companies and several Internet service providers.

Releasing the report at the National Press Club, Parshall and three other media law experts highlighted two applications stricken from Apple's iTunes and iPhone app stores because of their traditional religious views against homosexuality.

Gay rights groups publicly pressured Apple to remove apps for the Manhattan Declaration, sponsored by a coalition of conservative groups, and one from the ex-gay Christian ministry Exodus International.

Parshall said the NRB is focused not only on religious discrimination, but on a wider problem of free speech.

"We're still in the quandary of finding what the best remedy is," said Parshall.

The report discourages litigation, legislation or judicial remedies, however, instead advocating for new media companies to change their practices voluntarily. Panelist Harold Furchtgott-Roth of the Hudson Institute said he has "absolutely no confidence in those government solutions."

The NRB plans to send letters to media companies to initiate discussions about changing their policies.