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Since its inception, YouTube has been embroiled in long and bitter battles over copyright infringement. And over the years, the video site has increased its policing of pirated material. But too often, the company says, the demands of copyright holders to take down videos go too far. Now, YouTube is taking the unusual step of financially supporting YouTube creators so they can fight back.



YouTube said on Thursday that it would pick up the legal costs of a handful of video creators that the company thinks are the targets of unfair takedown demands. It said the creators it chose legally use third-party content under "fair use" provisions carved out for commentary, criticism, news and parody. An example of fair use is a segment by the TV host Stephen Colbert that rebroadcasts cable news clips for the comedian to react to.

Constantine Guilliotis, who goes by Dean and whose channel dedicated to debunking sightings of unidentified flying objects has just over 1,000 subscribers, is one of the video makers YouTube will defend. Mr. Guilliotis has received three takedown notices from copyright holders of videos that he has found online and posted to his YouTube

For more information, please contact: ionaffiliates@ionmedia.com
channel, U.F.O. Theater.

In his videos, Mr. Guilliotis includes the videos he found but also provides analysis and commentary, which YouTube argues is within the guidelines of fair use rules. The site reposted the videos after its review and told Mr. Guilliotis it would defend him against any

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future legal action. Like the other creators YouTube has selected, Mr. Guiliotis has not been sued for his videos. "It was very gratifying to know a company cares about fair use and to single out someone like me," Mr. Guiliotis said.

YouTube is starting small, initially supporting four video creators, but it said it may expand its program. The company said it wanted to protect free speech and educate users on fair use. But its announcement is also aimed at strengthening loyalty with video creators. YouTube faces new competition from Facebook, Twitter and traditional media companies that are trying to get consumers to upload more content onto their platforms.

On Wednesday, in a sign of how competitive the online video business has become, YouTube named Neal Mohan its new head of product and design. Mr. Mohan has been a top advertising executive at Google, which owns YouTube. "We want, when we can, to have our users' backs," said Fred von Lohmann, legal director for copyright at YouTube. "We believe even the small number of videos we are able to protect will make a positive impact on the entire YouTube ecosystem."

Mr. Lohmann said the number of legitimate videos affected by takedown notices was small. And big entertainment companies are not always the most aggressive in demanding that the videos be removed. But the problem is growing, said Corynne McSherry, legal director at the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a digital rights group. "It's become incredibly easy to take down legitimate content, and we need a counterbalance to that situation, so we welcome YouTube's announcement," Ms. McSherry said.

Last spring, the Ohio Legislature demanded that YouTube take down a video by the local chapter of NARAL Pro-Choice, an abortion rights group, that contained footage of a committee meeting. The clip of the meeting was part of a bigger video meant as criticism of the behavior of some lawmakers. The group is now one of the video creators that YouTube has vowed to protect from copyright suits. "We aren't a large organization," said Kellie Copeland, executive director of NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio. "We just have six people here, so having YouTube's support allowed us to not be afraid and to stand our ground on this situation." — *New York Times*

Ten Pennsylvania House Republicans signed on to a letter Tuesday urging Gov. Tom Wolf to suspend the commonwealth's participation in relocating Syrian refugees. The letter comes as the U.S. House prepares to vote as soon as this week on legislation to temporarily halt in the resettlement of Syrians. Since last week's terror attacks in Paris, more than two-dozen governors have announced their objections to receiving refugees from the war-torn country.

All refugee applicants are subject to a lengthy process of screenings that involve the National Counterterrorism Center, the FBI's Terrorist Screening Center, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of Defense, according to the State Department. There also are legal questions about whether a governor could prevent refugees from entering their state.

But some lawmakers argue that administration officials have expressed concerns with the vetting program, and that American lives must not be put at risk in aiding displaced people from other countries. "Given the shocking and depraved nature of the terrorist attacks in Paris, we request that you join the leadership of governors in 27 states and indefinitely suspend efforts to bring Syrian refugees to Pennsylvania until there are verifiable and robust mechanisms in place to properly screen all participants for potential security risks," the legislators wrote to Wolf.

Those signing the letter to Wolf were Reps. Michael Fitzpatrick, Tom Marino, Patrick Meehan, Keith Rothfus, Bill Shuster, Tim Murphy, Ryan Costello, Joe Pitts, G.T. Thompson, and Mike Kelly. Rep. Lou Barletta, whose 11th District includes parts of Carbon County, wrote a separate letter to Wolf expressing similar concerns.

Lehigh Valley Congressman Charlie Dent also has said he would support a "pause" until the refugee vetting process can be reviewed. "Our current vetting process and security measures are comprehensive, but if there's one thing we've learned in the Age of Terror - no system is foolproof nor is there one that cannot be improved by additional testing and review," Dent said.

The state's two senators have divided on the refugee issue: Democrat Bob Casey has defended welcoming Syrians as "consistent with our values and history," while Republican Pat Toomey says the Obama administration should first prove that their system is secure. Three of the Democrats seeking to unseat Toomey next year struck similar tones in calling to welcome those seeking resettlement:

Citing his work in the Navy's anti-terrorism unit, retired Adm. Joe Sestak said the screening systems are "both capable of permitting humanitarian refugees while denying acceptance to those whom we find are not adequately screenable." "We cannot lose sight that the refugees fleeing Syria are the ones who are trying to escape the same people who unleashed the unimaginable violence that erupted in Paris," said Katie McGinty, who served as Wolf's chief of staff. Braddock Mayor John Fetterman said stepping up military action and turning away refugees "is the wrong response." –

Allentown Morning Call

A House committee on Wednesday approved legislation that would provide for Pennsylvania to regulate online gambling. The bill also would allow the state's international airports -- including the Pittsburgh airport -- to offer slot machines for use by ticketed passengers. And it would allow casinos to purchase licenses allowing them to serve alcohol 24 hours a day.

The changes are described in a summary document provided by Rep. John Payne, R-Dauphin, chairman of the House Gaming Oversight Committee. The legislation would have to pass the full House and the Senate before it could reach the governor. Steve Miskin, spokesman for House Majority Leader Dave Reed, said Republican leadership does not have a position on the legislation. He said legislators needed to put a gambling-related bill in place in case budget negotiators turn to gaming to generate additional revenue. – ***Associated Press***



127 State Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101
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