

## Lee Goodman Pens Op-Ed on Honest Ads Act

---

September 2019

Wiley Rein partner Lee E. Goodman has penned a widely read editorial in *The Hill* titled "'Honest' Political Ads: Watch Out Drudge, You're Next."

Mr. Goodman addresses the implications of the Honest Ads Act, a bill pending in Congress, for the political privacy and free speech rights of American citizens. Mr. Goodman argues that American citizens would be chilled from discussing public policy issues under the bill's provision mandating that media and tech platforms collect and publish the names and addresses of advertisers who spend as little as \$500 on ads discussing public policy. "When Congress returns to business next week, it will take up ... the Honest Ads Act, a bill severely restricting the First Amendment rights of American citizens and media companies but barely impacting foreign meddlers," Mr. Goodman writes.

Mr. Goodman concludes that the Honest Ads Act would be ineffective at preventing foreign meddling in U.S. elections, which is its stated objective. Mr. Goodman posits instead that Congress could more effectively confront foreign propaganda by amending the Foreign Agents Registration Act, a bill that regulates, but does not prohibit, the dissemination of foreign-sponsored information in the United States with appropriate disclaimers identifying the foreign sponsor.

Mr. Goodman previously wrote about the federal district court's decision in *The Washington Post v. McManus*, a ruling that enjoined Maryland's analog to the Honest Ads Act, because the law would force media companies to publish information about their advertisers they desire not to publish. Maryland has appealed that decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit.