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Welcome back to the Unfinished newsletter, where we explore the intersection of tech, ethics, and social impact.

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What we're thinking about

We're thinking about the Bill of Rights. No, not that [bill of rights](#), but a new blueprint for a possible future [Bill of Rights focused on artificial intelligence](#) that was released last week by the White House.

It's just a blueprint for now (and we'll get into why this is an important distinction below), but could this AI Bill of Rights become something more enforceable and powerful? We're curious to find out. Let's explore what's in it, what's not, and what it all means.

The Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights is a 73-page document published by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy that outlines five principles designed to “protect the American public in the age of artificial intelligence.”

1. You should be protected from unsafe or ineffective systems.
2. You should not face discrimination by algorithms and systems should be used and designed in an equitable way.
3. You should be protected from abusive data practices via built-in protections and you should have agency over how data about you is used.
4. You should know that an automated system is being used and understand how and why it contributes to outcomes that impact you.
5. You should be able to opt out, where appropriate, and have access to a person who can quickly consider and remedy problems you encounter.

At this stage, the Blueprint for the AI version of a Bill of Rights is just a white paper, so it's not enforceable, which has been one of the primary criticisms so far. It doesn't have any control over large tech companies, who wield the most power in designing, building, and using artificial intelligence.

The Blueprint lays out detailed, prescriptive steps that corporations can take. [Alondra Nelson, from the OSTP, said](#) "Upwards of 80% of the document is about precise, prescriptive things that different stakeholders can do to ensure that people's rights are protected in the design and use of technologies."

The Blueprint for the AI Bill of Rights is ambitious, but there are also parts of it that seem infeasible. It says that "you should be able to opt out from automated systems in favor of a human alternative." But as [tech journalist Hirsh Chitkara points out](#), currently, "there simply aren't human alternatives at scale for much of what we do on the internet."

Rob Horning, Executive Editor of [The New Inquiry](#), goes even further on [his substack](#): "The report spends little time explaining why these principles are so routinely and readily discarded, and it doesn't examine why it is that violating privacy, exercising discrimination, and cloaking it all in 'trade secrecy' are good for business. It certainly has no ideas for how to disincentivize them; just a lot of statements of what system designers 'should' do, provided they weren't operating under the constraints and contradictions of capitalism. Many of the recommendations seem to overlook that automated systems depend on coercion and non-optionality to work; they are premised on the idea that it is better to collect data about people than to solicit their opinion, and that decisions that leave humans out of the loop are more lucrative than following due process."

In the absence of any enforceability and power over the AI owned by the private sector, the Blueprint focuses on an ethical framework for AI. In this respect, [it is not alone](#), joining the EU and even the Vatican in similar moral and ethical declarations. The [Catholic Church endorsed the "Rome Call for AI Ethics"](#) that outlines six principles to integrate ethics into the use of AI.

The EU is developing more powerful AI regulation, with the European Parliament considering ways to update existing laws and ban certain forms of AI completely. Last week the [European Commission proposed a new law](#) that would allow consumers to sue companies for damages if they can demonstrate that a company's AI has harmed them.

We still don't know what precedent the Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights will set. It has the potential to influence future legislation. Sneha Revanur, who leads Encode Justice, an organization that focuses on young people and AI, believes that it could [set the stage for the passage of the Algorithmic Accountability Act](#) or the creation of an agency to regulate AI.

But we can't just hope for future regulation. There's work to be done in building new models and supporting innovations that can become viable, human-

centered alternatives to our current algorithms and artificial intelligence.

For more of a deep-dive on the AI Bill of Rights, check out this [Tech Policy Press podcast](#) hosted by [Justin Hendrix](#). Justin spoke at Unfinished Live on the data surveillance economy and the state of democracy. You can watch a video of his Unfinished Live session [here](#), and you can watch all the videos from Unfinished Live for free by visiting this [Video Library](#).



Other notable headlines

👁️ What is it really like in the metaverse? One [tech journalist from The New York Times](#) straps on Meta's Quest 2 virtual reality headset to find out. She joined 300,000 people who are regularly hanging out in Meta's Horizon Worlds metaverse, spending dozens of hours — at all hours of the day and night — meeting all kinds of avatars: from trolls to pre-teens to community guides hired by Meta who work 8-hour shifts answering questions and enforcing its [code of conduct](#). Is the metaverse the future of the internet or a virtual playground?

🌐 Has the internet gone all wrong? And is a decentralized web the answer? Kaitlyn Tiffany from *The Atlantic* visited Unfinished Live to find out. In [this article in The Atlantic](#), she explores the difference between the decentralized web (or DWeb) and web3, and the principles underpinning the DWeb movement: giving individuals greater control over their online identities and information.

💡 Are we approaching a breaking point around content moderation and online speech? While the left demands greater action against disinformation, the right cries foul about censorship and the need for free speech. At the center of the crisis are social media platforms and Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, which gives online platforms the ability to host, distribute, and moderate content posted by users without being held liable for what's been posted. This [Washington Post article](#) provides a history of online content moderation up to present day, where the stage is set to reinterpret the first amendment for the digital age.

🇪🇺 The EU has a new [draft EU Bill](#) that is intended to regulate harmful artificial intelligence. The Bill gives the right to people and companies to sue for damages if they can prove they have been harmed by an AI system. In response, tech companies are claiming such regulation will hurt innovation, but as [John Naughton explores in The Guardian](#), large tech companies have not only stifled innovation from small upstarts, but have also used their power to dodge liability. That might change when this draft bill becomes law in two years.

Thank you for reading.

Follow Unfinished ([@byUnfinished](#) on Twitter and [@thisisunfinished](#) on IG) for ongoing chitchat on the changing web.

Have a great, restful weekend.

The Unfinished team

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