Beat: News

TikTok Goes Dark In America

Can Donald Trump Save TikTok

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USPA NEWS - 118th Congress (2023-2024) signed the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act into public law on April 24, 2024. The law prohibits a third party or hosting services such as Google or Apple from “distributing, maintaining, or hosting” a foreign adversary-controlled application, e.g., TikTok. The law also prohibits third parties from offering the app in their app stores like Google Play and Apple App Stores. TikTok has an astonishing 170 million users in the United States and 1 billion globally.

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TikTok Oral Argument Heard By Supreme Court Justices-

January 13, 2025: The United States Supreme Court heard oral arguments to stop a possible TikTok ban stemming from a law passed geared toward protecting national security. 118th Congress (2023-2024) signed the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act into public law on April 24, 2024. The law prohibits a third party or hosting services such as Google or Apple from “distributing, maintaining, or hosting” a foreign adversary-controlled application, e.g., TikTok. The law also prohibits third parties from offering the app in their app stores like Google Play and Apple App Stores. TikTok has an astonishing 170 million users in the United States and 1 billion globally. TikTok was founded by Zhang Yiming, Liang Rubo, and a team of others in 2012 through its parent company ByteDance. ByteDance Ltd is a Chinese internet technology company headquartered in Beijing and incorporated in the Cayman Islands. During the hearing, Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor stated that “TikTok has many data collecting mechanisms” that allow the app to collect sensitive data from its users.

The app then asks for “further” permission to access even more data, such as contact info and phone data, making Americans who are not even using TikTok vulnerable to exposure. Justice Sotomayor’s statement echoes the same concern that prompted Congress to act, although the 170 million American users may not agree and feel this law will violate their First Amendment rights.

Possible Threat TikTok Poses To The American Public:

Congress found that ByteDance is subject to Chinese laws that require it to assist and cooperate with Chinese government intelligence work. This work ensures the Chinese government can access and control the company's data. According to Congress and the Supreme Court, Public data security is one of the primary issues. Data harvesting by a foreign adversary is a significant threat to national security, and the ability to manipulate content to undermine democracy and trust in the United States Government is the reason for the ban. According to the Supreme Court, The United States Government found TikTok, as an American company, has no authority or ability to alter the algorithm recommendation engine but must follow ByteDance's directive.

Justice Amy Barret said, “The concern was a covert content manipulation piece of the algorithm that represents what ByteDance wants to speak.” On January 17, 2025, the Supreme Court ruled on the case law TikTok Ink Vs. Garland Per Curiam, the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act deems it unlawful for companies in the United States to distribute, maintain, or update the social media platform TikTok unless the U.S. operation of the platform is severed from Chinese control.

Average Age Of Congress VS Average Age Of TikTok Users:

TikTok has a reported 170 million users in the United States and 1.5 billion worldwide. Nearly 60% of U.S. TikTok users are between 18 and 34. 19% of TikTok users are 35-44, and 14% are 55 and over. According to a survey conducted by Fiscal Note, the average age of the 118th Congress members is 58 and ranked 9% of the TikTok users in 2022. Joe Biden, the oldest person to be inaugurated as President of The United States, said in a news briefing he “Would leave TikTok’s fate in the hands of President-Elect Donald J. Trump. President Biden said, “TikTok should remain available to Americans, but simply under American ownership. The White House administration stated they would not enforce the law that President Biden signed but would leave it in the hands of the incoming administration.

Can President Donald Trump Save TikTok-

On Sunday, January 19, 2025, 170 million Americans could not use their TikTok app. If a user opens the app on any device, a message reads: “Sorry, TikTok isn’t available right now- A law banning TikTok has been enacted in the U.S. Unfortunately, that means you can’t use TikTok for now. We are fortunate that President Trump has indicated that he will work with us to find a solution to reinstate TikTok once he takes office. Please stay tuned!”. Thousands of Americans express outrage as an app that was fundamental to their communication, information, and entertainment, and what many deem as free speech has been stripped away. An LSU student who wants to remain anonymous says he “would use the app first thing in the morning before anything else, and that's how (he) would find places to eat [locally] and get information on many different topics.” We will provide in-depth updates as more news develops.

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