

Biden says he will sign law banning TikTok if Congress passes it

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Legislation sponsored by Republican leaders of the House of Representatives, which would ban the social media platform TikTok from the US if it is not sold by its Chinese owners, is being moved rapidly forward toward a vote.

The draft bill specifically names TikTok and its parent ByteDance, which is based in Beijing, and demands that the popular short-form video app be sold to a US-based corporation or it will be shut down by massive government fines.

The transparent purpose of the bill is to whip up anti-Chinese hysteria within the US. The campaign is based on unsubstantiated claims that the data of the more than 100 million US users of TikTok is being analyzed by the Chinese government to spy on the American population and manipulate public opinion.

Confident of the bipartisan support for the bill, House majority leader Steve Scalise (Republican from Louisiana) said on Monday that he would try to speed it to a vote under procedures reserved for noncontroversial legislation requiring a two-thirds majority for passage.

Speaking for wide layers of the American political establishment, Scalise articulated the anti-China basis of the law, saying, “We must ensure the Chinese government cannot weaponize TikTok against American users and our government through data collection and propaganda.”

On Thursday, the legislation was passed unanimously by the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson supports the bill and has indicated it would soon be put to a full vote in the House.

On Friday, when he was asked about the bill, President Biden said, “If they pass it, I’ll sign it.”

TikTok is among the most popular social media apps.

There are over 1.1 billion users of the platform in 160 countries worldwide. Released in September 2016, TikTok allows users to create, watch and share videos recorded on their smartphones.

Tik Tok has very high engagement levels and it has set advertising revenue records. This is because a key component of the platform is its video recommendation algorithm that uses artificial intelligence to predict what a user wants to watch while it learns and serves up clips in succession, keeping users viewing.

The text of the draft bill states that it seeks to “protect the national security of the United States from the threat posed by foreign adversary controlled applications, such as TikTok,” or any service, “developed or provided by ByteDance Ltd. or an entity under the control of ByteDance Ltd.”

The bill defines a “foreign adversary controlled applications” as “a website, desktop application, mobile application, or augmented or immersive technology application that is operated, directly or indirectly (including through a parent company, subsidiary, or affiliate),” including TikTok and ByteDance or by an individual or company that is controlled by a “foreign adversary.”

The definition of a “foreign adversary” in the bill exposes the antidemocratic content of the legislation. It says a “foreign adversary” is “determined by the President to present a significant threat to the national security of the United States,” as long as a “public notice” proposing the determination is issued and that “a public report to Congress, [is] submitted not less than 30 days before such determination.”

Finally, the bill states that a company that violates these rules, “shall be subject to pay a civil penalty in an amount not to exceed the amount that results from multiplying \$500 by the number of users within the

land or maritime borders of the United States affected by such violation.” In the case of TikTok, this would be a maximum fine of \$500 million, an amount that would render the company inoperable.

There are several key political and ideological drivers behind the hysteria being mounted by both Democrats and Republicans against TikTok and China. On the one hand, the two-party establishment sees the offensive as a means of building up the political climate for economic and military aggression against China.

On the other hand, there are deep-going fears within the ruling class that social media platforms like TikTok are undermining the imperialist narrative about the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and the genocide being carried out by Israel in Gaza.

It is a fact that independent social media publishing, especially posts exposing the crimes committed by the Zionist Israeli Defense Forces in Gaza, is cutting across the lies being told by the US government and corporate media about the genocide against Palestinians, especially the despicable lie that opposition to Israel and Zionism is synonymous with antisemitism.

In response, an effort is being mounted to get control of and manipulate the content on the social media platforms through methods of censorship.

While Democrats and Republicans speak endlessly about unsubstantiated claims that TikTok is enabling the Chinese government to gather data on the American public, there have been repeated reports by the US government itself that intelligence agencies and law enforcement are violating Fourth Amendment rights by carrying out surveillance of the electronic communications of everyone without a warrant.

The campaign to shut down TikTok on national security grounds has been underway since the summer of 2020 when Donald Trump was in the White House. At that time, Trump sought to use presidential executive authority to force ByteDance to divest itself of TikTok. At one point, Trump developed a plan to essentially steal TikTok and hand it over to one or another of the giant US tech monopolies, or even Walmart.

In the end, Trump was blocked in court when TikTok filed a lawsuit and a Washington D.C. federal judge ruled that the White House attempt to force the platform to be sold was unconstitutional. Trump even went to the absurd lengths of claiming that the

expropriation of TikTok by the US government would generate a \$5 billion fund that would be used to “educate people” about the “real history of our country.”

On Thursday, writing on his own social media platform Truth Social, Trump came out against the banning of TikTok on the grounds that it would help Facebook, which he described as an “enemy of the people.” Speaking on CNBC “Squawk Box,” Trump told the program’s Joe Kernan, using a phrase that can only be understood as an antisemitic slur, that removing TikTok will make “Facebook bigger” and then referred to Facebook’s parent Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg as “Zuckerbucks.”



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