

Arkansas requires parents' OK for children on social media

April 13 2023, by ANDREW DeMILLO



Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders signs a bill requiring age verification before creating a new social media account as Sen. Tyler Dees, R-Siloam Springs, looks on during a signing ceremony on Wednesday, April 12, 2023, at the state Capitol in Little Rock, Ark. Credit: Thomas Metthe/Arkansas Democrat-Gazette via AP

Arkansas on Wednesday became the second state to restrict social media

use by children, as Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders approved [legislation](#) requiring minors to get their parents' permission to create a new account.

The bill signed by the Republican governor requires social media companies to contract with third-party vendors to perform age verification checks on new users. The law will apply to new accounts created starting in September.

"While social media can be a great tool and a wonderful resource, it can have a massive negative impact on our kids," Sanders said before signing the legislation.

The proposal is similar to a first-in-the-nation law that Utah Gov. Spencer Cox [signed last month](#). Utah's law takes effect in March 2024. Several other states are considering similar measures, touted by supporters as a way to protect children. California last year enacted a law requiring [tech companies](#) to put kids' safety first by barring them from profiling children or using [personal information](#) in ways that could harm children physically or mentally.

Sanders last month announced the state had filed lawsuits against TikTok and Facebook parent Meta, claiming the [social media companies](#) misled consumers about the safety of children on their platforms and the protection of users' private data.

The legislation has drawn criticism from opponents who said restrictions could raise new privacy concerns and exacerbate the mental health crisis among [young people](#). Experts have also [questioned](#) how and if the restrictions could be enforced.

"The governor and the legislators who voted for this bill must not understand the harm it will cause to the privacy and free speech rights of the people they represent, because if they did, I don't think they could

pass it in good conscience," Jason Kelley, acting director of activism for the Electronic Frontier Foundation, said in a statement.

The restrictions would only apply to [social media platforms](#) that generate more than \$100 million in annual revenue. It also wouldn't apply to certain platforms, including LinkedIn, Google and YouTube.

Social media companies that knowingly violate the age verification requirement could face a \$2,500 fine for each violation under the new law. The law also prohibits third party vendors from retaining identifying information of users after they've been granted access to the [social media](#) site.

Republican Sen. Tyler Dees, the Arkansas bill's sponsor, said the new law "sends a clear message that we want to partner with parents and empower them to protect our children."

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