

# Social media expert discusses consequences of changes for TikTok, Twitter

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Montana has become the first state to ban TikTok, with Gov. Greg Gianforte signing a bill that will levy steep fines on any platform selling the popular, Chinese-owned social media app. Meanwhile, tech mogul

Elon Musk, whose ownership of social media network Twitter has brought tumultuous change, announced he will pass the title of CEO to his handpicked replacement, advertising executive Linda Yaccarino with NBC Universal.

Mike Horning, an associate professor of multimedia journalism at Virginia Tech's School of Communication, discusses what these developments could mean for these embattled yet still highly influential social media platforms.

## **Q: What is the rationale behind Montana's ban of TikTok?**

"The Montana bill that the governor signed argues for a ban based on concerns for national security, [privacy concerns](#) regarding American data, and the assertion that TikTok poses a threat to public health. Those three together could make a compelling case in the courts. The legal test will be whether the government can demonstrate enough evidence to show that all three concerns are compelling enough to override any First Amendment issues."

## **Q: Can this ban withstand legal challenges?**

"Civil rights groups have already said that they will challenge the ban on First Amendment grounds, as postings on TikTok are a form of speech. Generally, the government cannot ban protected forms of speech. The ban could also have an [economic impact](#) on individuals who use the platform for business purposes, contributing to make this move unpopular with the public. At the same time, the government has been successful at banning some [communication technologies](#) in the past with the argument that the technology posed a [national security](#) threat."

## **Q: Is it genuinely possible to stop Americans from using TikTok?**

"It might be, over time. Apps often need updating, thus limiting access through the Apple and Google stores could eventually make the apps on current phones unusable. At the same time, people can be creative in finding workarounds if they feel that app is important enough to use on a daily basis."

## **Q: What might incoming Twitter CEO Yaccarino's interests be?**

"Yaccarino has been recognized for being innovative in advertising, particularly in the digital space. The move probably indicates that Twitter is looking to expand its offerings in the social media space. That might come in the form of streaming services, more secure private chats or any number of new offerings that could expand the reach of advertisers."

## **Q: Given that Musk remains owner of Twitter with millions of followers there, will this change affect his influence?**

"Musk has been pretty clear that he believes the platform is a place for people to openly share their opinions, and he isn't shy about sharing his own, so that likely won't change, which may present some challenges for Yaccarino."

## **Q: How might Yaccarino's presence shore up relations with users and advertisers?**

"Yaccarino's background in advertising with traditional media companies means she brings some credibility to Twitter's advertising model as they move forward under Musk's ownership. That will potentially bring back advertisers who may be skeptical of the change of leadership. I think she also has several interesting experiences working with [big data](#), streaming content, and consumer insights that may all be assets as she takes on the role of CEO."

Provided by Virginia Tech

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