

Biden secures tech safety pledges over 'enormous' AI risks

July 21 2023, by Sebastian Smith



US President Joe Biden speaks about artificial intelligence alongside senior tech executives.

President Joe Biden evoked AI's "enormous" risk and promise Friday at a White House meeting with tech leaders who committed to guarding

against everything from cyber-attacks to fraud as the sector revolutionizes society.

"It is astounding," Biden said, highlighting AI's "enormous, enormous promise of both risk to our society and our economy and our national security, but also incredible opportunities."

Standing alongside top representatives from Amazon, Anthropic, Google, Inflection, Meta, Microsoft and OpenAI, Biden said the cutting-edge companies had made commitments to "guide responsible innovation" as AI rips ever deeper into personal and business life.

"We'll see more technology change in the next 10 years or even in the next few years than we've seen in the last 50 years. That has been an astounding revelation to me," Biden said. "The group here will be critical in shepherding that innovation with responsibility and safety."

Ahead of the meeting, the seven AI giants committed to a series of self-regulated safeguards that the White House said would "underscore three principles that must be fundamental to the future of AI: safety, security and trust."

Although AI—in which computer programs learn to do many jobs currently performed by humans—is seen as a hugely empowering tool, it also poses potentially nightmarish risks.

In their pledge, the companies agreed to develop "robust technical mechanisms," such as watermarking systems, to ensure users know when content is from AI and not human-generated.



US President Joe Biden said artificial intelligence has "enormous, enormous potential upside"

Worry that content created by artificial intelligence will be used for fraud and misinformation has ramped up as the technology improves and the 2024 presidential election gets closer.

Already, supporters of Republican candidate Ron DeSantis have gotten attention with an attack ad featuring an artificially generated voice like that of party frontrunner Donald Trump.

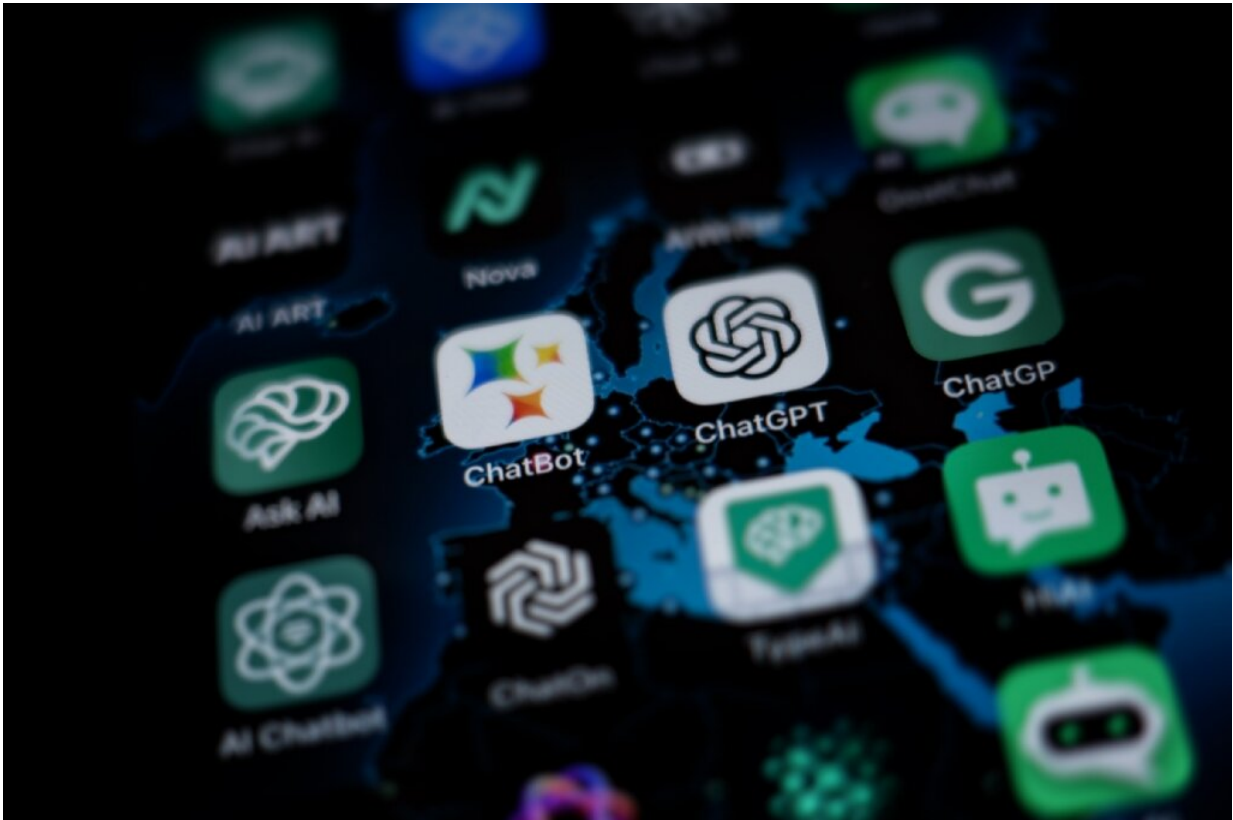
'Enormous potential upside

The White House initiative demonstrates an early effort to get in front of the snowballing problem of how to regulate an industry developing faster than Congress may be able to handle.

Among the measures pledged by the seven companies ahead of the Biden meeting is agreeing to independent "internal and external security testing of their AI systems before their release" for threats to biosecurity, cybersecurity and "broader societal effects."

Officials said Biden is also already working on an executive order—something that has limited powers, but does not require congressional approval—on AI safety.

"We need to make sure we're pulling every lever of the federal government to regulate and take action—and work with... (Congress) on legislation," White House Chief of Staff Jeff Zients told Axios.



The White House says it is working on an executive order aimed at making sure artificial intelligence is safe and trustworthy.

"We will need legislation to build the capacity to have the experts that we need in the federal government, and then to have the regulatory authority to hold the private sector accountable—and to hardwire these actions so that they're enduring," Zients said.

The White House said it is also working with foreign allies to seek "a strong international framework to govern the development and use of AI" around the world. The topic was prominent at the G7 in Japan this May, while Britain is set to hold an international AI summit.

Biden cautioned that governments and societies need to do better on the

emergence of AI than was the case when social media platforms exploded, leading to widespread concern over the effects on mental health and misinformation.

"Social media has shown us the harm that powerful technology can do without the safeguards in place," Biden said.

"We must be clear-eyed and vigilant about the threats of emerging technology that can pose to our democracy and our values," he said.

But AI also has an "enormous, enormous potential upside."

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