

US House overwhelmingly passes TikTok ban bill

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US lawmakers are set to vote on a bill that would force TikTok to cut ties with its Chinese owner or get banned in the United States.

The US House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved a bill on Wednesday that would force TikTok to divest from its Chinese owner or

get banned from the United States.

The lawmakers voted 352 in favor of the proposed law and 65 against, in a rare moment of bipartisan unity in politically divided Washington.

The legislation threatens to be a major setback for the video-sharing app, which has surged in popularity across the world while causing nervousness about its Chinese ownership and its potential subservience to the Communist Party in Beijing.

The fate of the bill is uncertain in the Senate, where some key figures are apprehensive of making such a drastic move against an app that has 170 million US users.

President Joe Biden will sign the bill, known officially as the "Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act," into law if it came to his desk, the White House has said.

The measure, which only gained momentum in the past few days, requires TikTok's parent company ByteDance to sell the app within 180 days or see it barred from the Apple and Google app stores in the United States.

It also gives the president power to designate other applications to be a [national security](#) threat if under the control of a country considered adversarial to the US.

The resurgent campaign by Washington against TikTok came as a surprise to the company, the Wall Street Journal reported, with TikTok executives reassured when Biden joined the app last month as part of his campaign for a second term.

TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew is in Washington, trying to shore up support

to stop the bill.

"This latest legislation being rushed through at unprecedented speed without even the benefit of a public hearing, poses serious Constitutional concerns," wrote Michael Beckerman, TikTok's vice president for public policy.

The Trump factor

The co-sponsors, House Republican Mike Gallagher and House Democrat Raja Krishnamoorthi, as well as the White House, argue that the bill is not a ban of TikTok, as long as the company divests from ByteDance.

China warned on Wednesday that the move will "inevitably come back to bite the United States."

"Although the United States has never found evidence that TikTok threatens US national security, it has not stopped suppressing TikTok," foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said, condemning it as "bullying behavior."

Republican lawmakers approved the bill, in an unusual act of defiance against Donald Trump.

In a turnaround from his earlier stance, Trump on Monday said he was against a ban, mainly because it would strengthen Meta, the owner of Instagram and Facebook, which he called an "enemy of the people."

When Trump was president, he attempted to wrest control of Tiktok from ByteDance, but was blocked by US courts.

Trump denied accusations that he changed his tune because a major

investor in TikTok, hedge funder Jeff Yass, is donating to his 2024 election campaign.

"I think it will die in the Senate," said representative Nancy Mace, a Trump ally. "This is not our job to this."

Other efforts to ban TikTok have failed with a [bill](#) proposed a year ago getting nowhere largely over free speech concerns.

Similarly, a state law passed in Montana banning the platform was suspended by a federal court on the suspicion that it violated constitutional free speech rights.

TikTok staunchly denies any ties to the Chinese government and has restructured the company so the data of US users stays in the country, the company says.

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