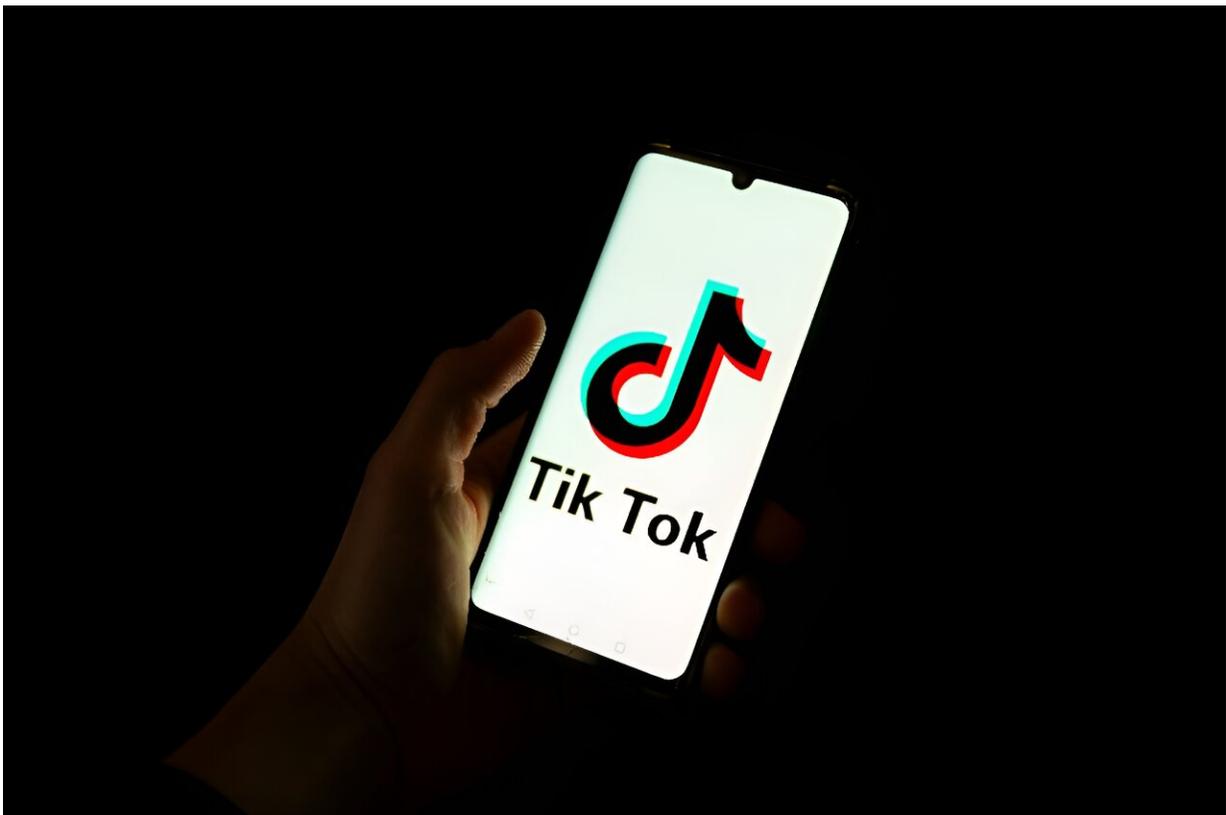


Bill to ban TikTok in US moves ahead in Congress

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TikTok says a ban on the app would violate freedom of expression.

The US House of Representatives approved a bill Saturday that would force the wildly popular social media app TikTok to divest from its Chinese parent company ByteDance or be shut out of the American

market.

US and other Western officials have voiced alarm over the popularity of TikTok with young people, alleging that it allows Beijing to spy on users. It has 170 million in the United States alone.

These critics also say TikTok is subservient to Beijing and a conduit to spread propaganda. China and the company deny these claims.

The bill, which could trigger the rare step of barring a company from operating in the US market, now goes to the Senate for a vote next week. It passed the House on Saturday with strong bipartisan support, by a margin of 360 to 58.

President Joe Biden has stated he will sign the legislation. He reiterated his concerns about TikTok in a [telephone conversation](#) with Chinese President Xi Jinping early this month.

The ultimatum to the social media app was included in a broader text that provides aid for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan.

TikTok quickly complained Saturday after the vote, saying in a statement "it is unfortunate that the House of Representatives is using the cover of important foreign and humanitarian assistance to once again jam through a ban bill that would trample the [free speech rights](#) of 170 million Americans, devastate 7 million businesses, and shutter a platform that contributes \$24 billion to the U.S. economy, annually."

Under scrutiny

Under the bill, ByteDance would have to sell the app within a year or be excluded from Apple and Google's app stores in the United States.

The House of Representatives last month approved a similar bill cracking down on TikTok, but the measure got held up in the Senate.

Steven Mnuchin, who served as US treasury secretary under former president Donald Trump, has said he is interested in acquiring TikTok and has assembled a group of investors.

TikTok has been in the crosshairs of US authorities for years, with authorities saying the platform allows Beijing to snoop on users in the United States.

But a law banning it could trigger lawsuits. This [bill](#) gives the US president the authority to designate other applications as a threat to [national security](#) if they are controlled by a country deemed hostile.

Elon Musk, the billionaire owner of X, formerly Twitter, came out Friday against banning TikTok, saying it went against freedom of expression.

"TikTok should not be banned in the U.S., even though such a ban may benefit the X platform," Musk said in a post on the social network he acquired in 2022.

"Doing so would be contrary to freedom of speech and expression," said Musk.

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