

US Senate to vote on kids online safety bills

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The US Senate will vote on a pair of bills this week designed to protect children online which would be the first major legislation targeting the tech industry in a generation.

Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer said on Tuesday that he had

gathered enough votes to pass the bills that had been drawn up in consultation with parents of teens who had been subject to bullying, sexual exploitation and other harms online.

Schumer, a Democrat, said the Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA) and Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA 2.0) would be put to a vote as early as Thursday.

"It has been a long and daunting road to get this bill passed, which can change and save lives, but today, we are one monumental step closer to success," Schumer said in a statement.

While there is widespread agreement in a politically divided US Congress on curbing the impact of social media, there has never been a united path on how to go about it.

If passed in the Senate, the bills would move to the Republican-run House of Representatives with hopes that they can be passed before the November US election.

The KOSA bill would establish a "duty of care" obligation on the [online platforms](#) that would demand that special provisions are in place to shield minors from toxic content.

Harms include [sexual exploitation](#), online bullying, the promotion of suicide and eating disorders.

KOSA would also limit the ability of others to communicate with [children](#) through online messaging and demand better parental controls.

Microsoft, X (formerly Twitter), and Snap are reportedly supporting the bill.

COPPA 2.0 would tighten privacy standards for minors as well as ban targeted advertising to kids online.

The bills face some opposition, including from LGBTQ and free speech advocates, who fear that they would deprive isolated teens of a safe place to interact with peers.

"If this legislation passes as is, [online services](#) will have no choice but to restrict their services from recommending content that the government decides will harm youth [mental health](#)," said Aliya Bhatia, a policy analyst with the Center for Democracy and Technology

This includes "information related to [sexual health](#) and reproductive care, racial justice, and LGBTQ+ issues," Bhatia added.

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