



Democrats Join Push to Ban TikTok from American-held Devices

By **Stacy M. Brown** | NNPA Newswire Senior National Correspondent | @StacyBrownMedia

(NNPA) - Democrats in Congress are making it clear that they want to ban the Chinese app TikTok in the U.S.

Reported national security concerns over massive amounts of data that TikTok collects on its millions of American users sit at the core of why lawmakers want the app banned.

Democrats and Republicans alike have said certain information of serious concern could be transferred to China, making it a national security issue.

However, TikTok's parent company, ByteDance, has repeatedly denied that it shares user data with the Chinese government.

"TikTok is a modern-day Trojan horse of the [Chinese Communist Party], used to surveil and exploit Americans' personal information," said Rep. Michael McCaul of Texas, the Republican chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

"It's a spy balloon in your phone," McCaul said, alluding to a February incident in which a spy balloon from China traversed American skies.

Last month, House Foreign Affairs Committee members pushed for a bill that would give President Biden the power to ban TikTok on all mobile devices in the U.S.

However, Democrats voted against the measure.

Democrats in the U.S. Senate did offer support late last year for a bill that would ban TikTok on federal devices, and a bipartisan group of senators, led by Mark Warner (D-Va.) and John Thune (R-S.C.),



also introduced a bill that would let Biden ban TikTok and other apps that come from other countries.

Five Democrats and five Republicans have signed on a co-sponsor on that legislation.

President Biden reportedly supports the measure and has indicated a willingness to ban TikTok, which has more than 1.53 billion users globally as

of 2023, with 1 billion monthly active users.

In February, Democratic Sen. Michael Bennet of Colorado called on Apple and

"Unlike most social media platforms, TikTok poses a unique concern because Chinese law obligates ByteDance, its Beijing-based parent company, to 'support, assist, and cooperate with state intelligence work,'" said Sen. Michael Bennet (D-Colo.), who has demanded that Apple and Google remove TikTok from their app stores.

During a national television appearance, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) said a TikTok ban "should be looked at."

The economic battle between the U.S. and China has been ongoing, with escalating tensions leading to threats of a potential armed conflict.

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre even alluded to the conflict in her remarks attacking a House Freedom Caucus budget plan.

"Extreme MAGA Republicans' proposals would ship manufacturing jobs overseas, in a crushing blow to states from Ohio to Georgia to Arizona – and would provide a windfall of economic benefits to China," Jean-Pierre stated.

TikTok spokeswoman Brooke Oberwetter argued that a U.S. ban on TikTok would ban the export of American culture and values to over a billion people who use the app worldwide.

"A ban would stifle American speech and would be a ban on the export of American culture and values to the billion-plus people who use our service worldwide," Oberwetter declared.

Biden Issues Another Executive Order Seeking to Curb Gun Violence

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(NNPA) - As he visited Monterey Park, California, on Tuesday, President Joe Biden lamented that every few days in the United States, the country mourns a new mass shooting.

Biden argued that daily acts of gun violence, including community violence, domestic violence, suicide, and accidental shootings, may not always make the evening news.

Still, they cut lives short and leave survivors and their communities with long-lasting physical and mental wounds.

Before the President met with the families and victims of the Star Ballroom Dance Studio shooting on January 21, which killed 11 people and injured nine others, he signed an executive order to stop gun violence and make the country's neighborhoods safer.

Also, the President told U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland to ensure that the laws already in place about background checks are followed.

Biden also told Garland to clarify that part of the law that says who has to do background checks because some gun dealers might not know that they fall under that part of the law.

"We cannot accept these facts as the enduring reality of life in America," Biden asserted.

"Instead, we must together insist that we have

had enough and that we will no longer allow the interests of the gun manufacturers to win out over the safety of our children and nation."

He said his administration's policy remains that executive departments and agencies would pursue "every legally available and appropriate action to reduce gun violence."

"Through this whole-of-government approach, my administration has made historic progress to save lives," the President asserted.

"My administration has taken action to keep guns out of dangerous hands and especially dangerous weapons off of our streets; hold gun traffickers and rogue gun dealers accountable; fund accountable, effective community policing; and invest in community violence interventions and prevention strategies."

Biden has taken several steps that he hoped would stop the mass shootings that have become common in the United States.

Administration officials said it's up to Congress to act.

"Few policy ideas are more popular among the American people than universal background checks, but Congress refuses to act," a senior administration official stated.

"This move will mean fewer guns will be sold

without background checks, and therefore fewer guns will end up in the hands of felons and domestic abusers."

Meanwhile, Biden called on his cabinet to act, including educating the public on "red flag" laws and addressing firearm thefts.

Already, the President was able to get the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act through Congress.

According to the White House, this law gives communities new tools to fight gun violence, such as better background checks for people under the age of 21, money for extreme risk protection orders and other crisis interventions, and more mental health resources to help children who have been affected by gun violence heal from the grief and trauma it has caused.

"I continue to call on Congress to take additional action to reduce gun violence, including by banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, requiring background checks for all gun sales, requiring safe storage of firearms, funding my comprehensive Safer America Plan, and expanding community violence intervention and prevention strategies," Biden continued.

"In the meantime, my administration will continue to do all that we can, within the existing authority, to make our communities safer."