

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

Floor Speech on TikTok

June 18th, 2025

[\[VIDEO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell: Mr. President, I rise to express my concerns about reports that President Trump is going to again extend the deadline for getting TikTok out of the control of ByteDance and the Chinese government. Concern because that means that again, we are going to allow this national security issue to fester and to continue on, maybe for several more months.

What we know now, though, in the middle of a global conflict, during which we know our enemies can weaponize TikTok to spread their propaganda and turn the world against the United States, we need to take action. While I know there are legitimate uses of TikTok, it is also used by governments, in particular the Chinese, to spread lies and indoctrinate people about what China, Iran, Russia, want Americans to believe about our own country, about our own government.

This is alarming when an app is the top news source of Americans under the age of 30. Let me give some examples of these practices.

In December 2023, Rutgers University found that TikTok's algorithm disproportionately amplified anti-Israel and, by extension, antisemitic content compared with other social media platforms. This amplification observed in the context of a major geopolitical events, such as the portrayal of the Israel-Hamas conflict, and such hashtags, "I stand with Israel" or "Pray for Israel," were unrepresented. That means they weren't represented at a ratio of six to one.

According to the Jewish Federation of North America, individuals on TikTok for over 30 minutes a day were 17% more likely to be antisemitic. And last year, antisemitic comments on TikTok rose 912%.

My fear is that a similar study would show that in between the issues that we do think are legitimate businesses on TikTok, that there is a bias and anti-American content being pushed about even the current hostilities now in Iran. That is why, Mr. President, I would like to submit for the record a report by Rutgers University entitled "A Tik-Tok-ing Timebomb: How TikTok's Global Platform Anomalies Align with the Chinese Communist Party's Geostrategic Objectives"

On the flip side of another example is the current topics that China doesn't like to talk about -- they're sensitive to. You're never going to see any information on TikTok about Tiananmen Square and what happened.

And now we're in a trade war. In a new report last month, Rutgers University found that following President Trump decision to put new tariffs on China, TikTok drove content pushing Americans to buy directly from Chinese manufacturers, as well as content denigrating US

companies. The research pointed it out, and it resulted in tens of millions of views on Chinese products, suggesting the platform influenced the user and drove behavior that changed at a massive scale. That is to say, now TikTok is being used against us in a trade war.

I'm also concerned that despite this clear and present danger, these extensions just continue to give China an ability to influence unduly American citizens. The President needs to implement the law that Congress gave him, that the Supreme Court has upheld, and protect our military and our citizens against this foreign misinformation that is taking place.

Last week, I asked Secretary Bessent from the Treasury whether he had been discussing TikTok at meetings with Chinese officials in London. He said they had not.

I'm concerned that these extensions of the TikTok deal are illegal. Note that Congress passed this law, and the president extending the deadline to allow them to continue to operate in the United States under the control of ByteDance and the Chinese government is not what Congress intended.

Congress said in the law that any deal on the sale of TikTok must include a transfer of the ownership of TikTok's source code, training data, and recommendation algorithms. This may be, for some people, not really clear, but we would not let the Chinese government own ABC or NBC, and we shouldn't let them broadcast their content into the United States on ABC or NBC, and we shouldn't allow them to do the same with TikTok.

The Supreme Court, as I said, unanimously upheld this law that Congress passed. I'm concerned that each extension, though, of not getting a deal, puts America and some of our leading tech companies at great financial risk.

Under the law, app stores that distribute and support TikTok are subject to severe penalties: up to \$5,000 per user, and that could amount to billions of dollars in damages. And while the current administration has signaled that they won't enforce the law, the statute of limitations for that liability is five years, meaning future administrations could apply those penalties retroactively.

So simply put, we cannot continue to allow foreign adversaries to control technology that can fuel domestic and political polarization and civil unrest. We need the president to follow the law that Congress passed, bring TikTok under US ownership.

I thank the President and I yield the floor.