

TIKTOK

Congress seems poised to pass potential TikTok ban in US. How would it work?

The measure sailed through the House as part of a foreign aid package.

By Max Zahn  NEWS

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Janice Yu reports the details from outside Columbia University.

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A potential ban of [TikTok](#) in the United States sailed through the House of Representatives over the weekend as part of a \$95 billion foreign aid package that garnered bipartisan support.

The social media crackdown may stand poised to become law, since President

Joe Biden has vowed to sign it if it passes the Senate and reaches his desk.

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The TikTok measure could still be removed from the foreign aid legislation in the Senate, but that would require the entire package to be sent back to the House for another vote -- at the same time that lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have stressed urgency for acting on the additional money for Ukraine and Israel.

If enacted, the measure would force a sale of the popular social media app by its Chinese parent company, ByteDance. In the absence of a sale, the app would be banned.



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Janice Yu reports the details from outside Columbia University.

TikTok did not immediately respond to ABC News' request for comment. In a previous statement, TikTok slammed the renewed efforts behind divestment.

"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," the platform said.

Here's what to know about whether the ban would ever take effect, what it means for users and how people may seek to bypass it:

Will TikTok ultimately get banned?

Even if the measure becomes law, TikTok may still avoid a ban.

ByteDance could opt to sell TikTok, ensuring the continued availability of the app for U.S. users. The bill passed in the House grants ByteDance nine months to sell, with the potential for a three-month extension.



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experts.

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TikTok and its users could challenge the law as an infringement upon constitutionally protected freedom of speech, Anupam Chander, a professor of law and technology at Georgetown University, previously told ABC News. In opposition, the U.S. government would likely argue that national security concerns should outweigh First Amendment protections, Chander said.

RELATED: [House votes for possible TikTok ban in US, but don't expect the app to go away anytime soon](#)

Last May, TikTok sued Montana in federal court over a ban of the app enacted by the state, saying the law violated the First Amendment rights of users. Months later, in November, a federal judge ruled in favor of TikTok and blocked the law before it took effect.

However, the measure in Montana may offer little insight into the legal outcome of a federal ban, Sarah Kreps, director of Cornell University's Tech Policy Institute, told ABC News. In Montana, lawmakers banned TikTok on privacy and child safety grounds, while the federal statute draws on national security considerations.



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"This is apples and oranges," Kreps said.

Still, if the U.S. enacts a law banning TikTok, a federal judge may order a temporary pause while the legal challenge makes its way through the court system due to the wide-reaching ramifications of such a measure.

How would a potential ban work?

The measure would ban TikTok by removing it from U.S. app stores, including popular platforms on iPhone and Android.

New customers would be unable to download the app, while current users would lose access to vital updates, experts told ABC News.

"Users can still keep the app on their mobile devices, but they won't be able to get the updates and eventually it's going to become outdated," Qi Liao, a professor of computer science at Central Michigan University, told ABC News.



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Users may be able to use the app for up to one year after the ban goes into effect, Liao added, but the app would deteriorate and eventually become inoperable.

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The potential decline of the app, I

"The reasons why people have wanted to use TikTok are that it's easy, it's fun, it has a nice user interface," Kreps added. "Without updates over time, it would not have those same qualities that users have liked."

Will users find ways to get around the ban?

Some users would likely be able to circumvent the ban, but it would prove too difficult or inconvenient for many, experts said.

"For the majority of people, it will be lots of trouble," Liao said. "For someone who is tech-savvy and motivated, they can do it."

For instance, individuals could pursue offline app installation that bypasses the app store, Liao said. To do this, he added, an individual could download an installation package from the internet, move it to a USB drive and transfer it to their phone.

RELATED: [White House wants TikTok's parent company to divest: 'We don't want to see a ban'](#)

Individuals could also use a Virtual Private Network, or VPN, which allows one to pose as a user logging on from a location abroad, thereby circumventing the U.S.-specific ban, experts said.

Some users would circumvent the ban but over time, the difficulty and annoyance would likely drive them to a competing service, Kreps said.

"It's not going to be an on/off switch," she added. "But people will prefer the path of least resistance."

ABC News' Lauren Peller, Alex Ederson and Jay O'Brien contributed to this report.

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