

## Utah Passes Game-Changing Law: Hold Social Media Companies Accountable for Harm Caused to Minors



Utah has become the first in the United States to require parental permission for individuals under 18 to use social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. Governor Spencer Cox signed two bills on Thursday, March 23, making it easier to sue social media companies for damages. The Republican-controlled legislature of Utah passed the two bills earlier this month.

Minors' use of social media and its impact on their mental health has been a topic of growing national debate in the US. Social media service providers are primarily protected from liability over their content under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, making it difficult to hold them accountable for any harm caused to minors. However, the new laws in Utah aim to change this by making it easier to sue social media companies for damages.

Governor Cox, a Republican, took to Twitter to express his support for the new laws. He stated, "We're no longer willing to let social media companies continue to harm the mental health of our youth." The bills are opposed by the tech industry and require all users to submit age verification before opening a social media account. Minors seeking an exception to this requirement would need permission from a parent.

The impact of social media on children has been a growing concern for several years. Many studies have shown that social media use can adversely affect young people's mental health, including depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Additionally, social media platforms have been criticized for their role in promoting cyberbullying, which can have devastating consequences for young people.

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The new laws in Utah address these concerns by giving parents more control over their children's social media use. The laws require social media companies to obtain parental consent before allowing minors to use their platforms. This will help parents monitor their children's social media use and ensure they are not exposed to harmful content or engaging in risky behavior online.

The tech industry has criticized the new laws, arguing that they will be difficult to enforce and create confusion for users. Some have also raised concerns about the potential for abuse, with parents using the laws to restrict their children's freedom of expression. However, supporters of the laws argue that they are necessary to protect children from the harmful effects of social media.

Overall, the new laws in Utah represent an essential step forward in the national conversation around social media and its impact on children. By requiring parental consent and making it easier to hold social media companies accountable for the harm caused to minors, the laws aim to create a safer and more responsible online environment for young people. While there may be challenges in enforcing the laws, their passage represents a positive development in the ongoing effort to protect children from the adverse effects of social media.