

## US House Speaker Drops Bombshell Announcement on TikTok - Lawmakers to Push Forward with Controversial Bill



On Sunday, U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Kevin McCarthy announced that lawmakers would move forward with legislation to address national security concerns about the popular video-sharing app TikTok. The speaker alleged that China's government accessed the app's user data, posing a risk to Americans.

TikTok, owned by China-based company ByteDance, has faced growing calls to be banned in the United States or for the Biden administration to have the legal authority to seek a ban. The U.S. government recently banned the app from devices owned by federal employees. "The House will be moving forward with legislation to protect Americans from the technological tentacles of the Chinese Communist Party," McCarthy wrote on Twitter.

Last Thursday, TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew appeared before a U.S. House Committee. It was grilled for about five hours by lawmakers from both parties about national security and other concerns involving the app. Currently, TikTok has 150 million American users.

In the hearing, the TikTok CEO was asked if the company spied on Americans at Beijing's request, to which Chew answered, "No." However, Republican Representative Neal Dunn referenced the company's disclosure in December that some China-based employees at ByteDance improperly accessed the TikTok user data of two journalists and were no longer employed by the company. He repeated his question about whether ByteDance was spying.

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"I don't think that spying is the right way to describe it," Chew said. He described the reports as involving an "internal investigation" before being cut off.

Despite Chew's testimony, McCarthy stated on Sunday, "It's very concerning that the CEO of TikTok can't be honest and admit what we already know to be true — China has access to TikTok user data."

In response to concerns, the company claims to have spent over \$1.5 billion on data security efforts under the name "Project Texas" and currently has nearly 1,500 full-time employees. Additionally, it is contracted with Oracle Corp to store TikTok's U.S. user data.

However, Chew's appearance before Congress last week may have done more harm than good, as Republican Representative Mike Gallagher of Wisconsin, the chairman of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, told ABC News on Sunday that it "actually increased the likelihood that Congress will take some action."

Former U.S. President Donald Trump had previously attempted to ban TikTok and another Chinese-owned app, WeChat, a unit of Tencent, in 2020 but lost a series of court rulings.

While Democrats have also expressed concerns about the app but have not explicitly backed a U.S. ban.

It remains clear what actions Congress will take to address national security concerns about TikTok. However, with the CEO's recent testimony failing to appease lawmakers, more stringent measures will likely be implemented to protect Americans' data.