



Harvard Model Congress

Boston 2025

INTERNET PRIVACY, DATA SECURITY, AND REGULATION IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

By Nick Dominguez

INTRODUCTION

The average American has 7.1 different social media accounts and spends over two hours on social media daily.

Big data – extremely large data sets that can be analyzed computationally to reveal insights about human behavior.

Take a look at your phone. How many social media apps do you use? On average, Americans have over seven different social media accounts and spend over two hours each day on social media (Wong, 2023).

With such heavy use, the owners of these social media sites can collect massive amounts of data from users, including the time users spend on a site, when they use the site, who they interact with, and what topics they do or not engage with. This large collection of millions of users' information, also known as **big data**, can be used by companies for a number of purposes. For example, they can target content and advertisements to users, or sell user data to other entities for purposes such as consumer or academic research, marketing, consulting, security monitoring, or law enforcement. Because big data from social media platforms is so broad and deep, it is incredibly valuable to many different parties with a wide variety of intentions for this data.

Many users are unaware just how valuable this data is to others. In the age of ubiquitous social media use, user data can fall into many different hands. This briefing will discuss current issues surrounding the collection, use, and circulation of data and content in the age of social media.

EXPLANATION OF THE ISSUE

Data breach – an incident in which unauthorized parties gain access to sensitive or confidential information.

Meta – Meta Platforms, Inc.; a technology conglomerate that owns and operates Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Messenger.

Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Meta and founder of Facebook.

An example of several different social media apps that are typically used by the average person. Since many use multiple social media apps, different companies have access to user data.

Mashable

Historical Development

The 1990s was the first decade in which the internet became prevalent in the Americans' everyday lives. Because the technology was incredibly new, the regulation of online networking platforms was minimal in the early stages of the internet.

As the 2000s approached, the internet became much more widely used. As the user base increased, social media platforms such as MySpace and Facebook emerged, pitching themselves as new ways to facilitate connections between users. As smartphones and mobile devices rose in popularity, social media became even more accessible. Because internet and mobile technology and social media were developing rapidly, governments took a mostly hands-off approach to regulation, and legislation could not keep up with the pace of innovation. As apps like Instagram and Twitter became widely popular, Americans began to use social media in record numbers. Through all of this, however, these platforms remained free to use for the everyday consumer, even as social media companies such as **Meta** – the parent company of Facebook and Instagram – saw soaring stock values. These companies were able to become highly valuable, despite consumers paying no monetary cost for their product. Instead, these social media companies make money from collecting user data and by collecting advertising revenue from companies who want to advertise on their platform to an audience of billions. As a result, the data and use of social media platforms very lucrative and valuable to other intuitions who may want access to the immense stores of data generated by users or have their products, services, and ideas be proliferated across the world.

Scope of the Problem

The widespread use of social media and the abundance and value of user data has given rise to myriad issues related to consumer privacy, ideological polarization, and commerce. The following sections outline some of the many facets related to social media in recent years. The effects of these issues are far-reaching, from individual internet users of all ages, to small businesses and large corporations, to elections and military intelligence. The impacts of social media cannot be understated. Therefore, it is important to have an in-depth understanding of these current problems.

Consumer Privacy and Data Use

One of the largest and most prevalent concerns surrounding big data is the protection of user data. Social media companies and

Artificial Intelligence (AI) – computer systems that can perform tasks that normally require human intelligence. This includes text and image generation, as well as decision-making.

Terms of service – the legal agreements between a company and a user that the user must agree to if they want to use the company's service or product.

many other firms collect data from users such as time spent on the platform, content viewed, personal information, and passwords. However, in recent years, some companies have failed to protect this sensitive information, leading to **data breaches** where outside actors can access private information. According to one estimate, 353 million people were affected by leaks of online personal information in a total of over 3,000 breaches in 2023. The telecommunications company T-Mobile had a breach that affected 37 million customers alone (Hulsey, 2024). In 2024, researchers discovered an unaccounted database containing 26 billion records of user data from X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, and Dropbox (Winder, 2023).

One of the most significant incidences in the past decade was the **Facebook-Cambridge Analytica data scandal**, in which the British consulting firm Cambridge Analytica was able to harvest Facebook data from almost 90 million Facebook users, mostly Americans. With the data, they built psychological profiles of American voters to sell to campaigns, which then engaged in targeted political advertising (Confessore, 2018). It was reported that both Donald Trump and Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX), during their 2016 presidential campaigns, bought these profiles from Cambridge Analytica (Chan, 2019). Facebook was subsequently fined \$5 billion by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) for these violations (Federal Trade Commission, 2019).

While these data breaches are accidental, there are also concerns about what these social media companies intentionally do with user data, with or without the knowledge of the user. When users start using an app or platform, they must agree to the **terms of service**, which outline what data the company collects and how they use a user's data. This is especially salient as more companies integrate **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** into their platforms. For example, the video conferencing application Zoom was criticized for being slow to update its unclear terms of service to reflect that they will not use user video, audio, or chat information to train their AI models without user consent. While they made their terms clearer, the company is still able to train their AI models on user behavior (Goldin, 2023).

National Security

Policymakers also worry that foreign and potentially adversarial governments could access sensitive data from American users — and how such intervention, especially from Russia and China, could affect the interests of the U.S. According to special counsel Robert Mueller, who investigated Russian involvement in the 2016 election, Russian operatives proliferated propaganda and disinformation on social media platforms to undermine confidence in the American electoral process, exacerbate political polarization, and disseminate pro-Russia content (Kelly and Samuels, 2019). During the 2022

midterm elections, Russian operatives worked to spread content to weaken American support for Ukraine or suggest that the U.S. was on the path to a civil war. With the development of AI, the U.S. government is concerned that Russia could once again weaponize social media to interfere in the 2024 election (De Luce and Collier, 2024).

Similarly, there is evidence that China has influenced American social media users. Microsoft and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue found that Chinese accounts — as part of a network called Spamouflage — published content that criticized Hong Kong protests and promoted China’s government and its actions to address COVID-19 on Facebook, X, and TikTok (Bond, 2024). There is particular concern among U.S. officials over Chinese influence on TikTok, which is owned by the Chinese company ByteDance. Advisors to the U.S. Secretary of Defense, including John F. Plumb, are concerned that because TikTok is owned by a Chinese company, it may be easier for Chinese officials to spread propaganda and disinformation to millions of Americans or collect their user data (Vergun, 2023). As a result, many lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have called for TikTok to be banned in the U.S. so long as the app is owned by a Chinese company. In April 2024, President Joe Biden signed a bill into law that would ban TikTok for American users unless the app is sold from ByteDance. Still, the law remains controversial and contested in court, and ByteDance has yet to sell the app (Jalonick and Hadero, 2024).



A sign depicting the TikTok icon the parent company ByteDance’s logo in Beijing, China. Some legislators are concerned that ByteDance’s ownership of TikTok could give the Chinese government access to American data.

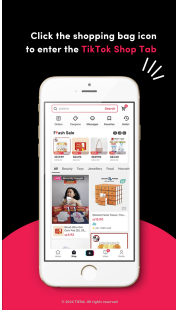
Reuters

Algorithm –rules, signals, and data that govern a website or app’s operation. They determine how content is filtered and recommended to users.

Ideological Wars and Polarization

Due to heavy use and **algorithms** designed to keep users engaged on these platforms, social media has become a hotbed of misinformation, serving to catalyze polarization and cause harm to users. Studies have found that social media algorithms lead to “ideological segregation” in the news that users consume by presenting them with sources and topics in increasing accordance with their political beliefs (Klepper, 2023). Facebook has recognized that its algorithms lead to **echo chambers**, and routinely will stifle extremist or hateful content, although such content eventually comes into circulation again (Barrett et. al., 2021). So far, measures to curb incendiary social media content are temporary and applied as needed, and American social media consumers are subject to inflammatory and biased feeds. The social media algorithms are designed to keep users online, and therefore are more likely to present emotional or provoking content to fuel engagement, rather than prioritizing relevance or accuracy (Shapiro et. al., 2022).

Social media companies also make attempts to monitor false statements and disinformation on their platforms, but there are current problems with these efforts as well. While sites such as X rely on crowd-sourced Community Notes to flag false statements on their



A graphic displaying the interface of the TikTok shop where users can buy products directly from TikTok creators and businesses. Some praise the TikTok Shop as a significant catalyst in their business' growth.

TikTok

Echo chamber – a space in which a person only encounters beliefs or opinions that agree with their own, and therefore their existing beliefs are reinforced while other ideas are not considered.

platform, Facebook and others use independent fact checkers to curb misinformation. However, there are claims that efforts to flag misinformation unfairly censor certain topics or beliefs. In late 2023, Instagram enabled a feature that allowed users to control the number of fact-checked posts in their feed and subtly set the default level to reduce the frequency of fact-checked posts. Some accounts who posted pro-Palestine content claimed that Instagram was censoring their posts due to this default setting (Goggin, 2023). Others have highlighted that Facebook posts flagged as misinformation are more likely to be consumed by conservative users (Klepper, 2023). As a result, prominent Republican leaders such as Governor Greg Abbott of Texas and Governor Ron DeSantis of Florida have claimed that these social media companies censor conservative beliefs and have taken legal action against such moderation attempts (Chung, 2023).

Business Implications

Internet and social media utilization is not limited to only individuals and their entertainment. Businesses large and small rely on the broad platforms of Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and other social media applications to publicize their goods and services to millions. Social media has evolved from an online network to a digital marketplace, in which businesspeople can connect with consumers and clients they would otherwise never find. While many people increasingly call for certain apps such as TikTok to be banned or advertising on social media platforms to be limited, some business owners and content creators are concerned that these demands will wreak havoc on their enterprises. The short-form video social media app TikTok has been especially beneficial for content creators and small business owners. According to TikTok, upwards of seven million American small businesses use the platform, and these companies made a combined total of \$15 billion in revenue from TikTok promotion in 2023 (Kaloï, 2024). To many creators, a proposed ban on TikTok in the United States unless the company is sold to an American owner would be devastating. While entrepreneurs advertise on other platforms, 29% of career content creators cite TikTok as their primary source of income — more than any other platform — and many claim that TikTok pays more dividends to content creators than competitors YouTube and Instagram (Jeczmiën, 2024). Content creators and small business owners praise TikTok for its feature allowing users to purchase products directly from videos, and some creators, who claim the majority of their revenue comes from TikTok, are fearful that banning the app would devastate their livelihoods (Hadero and D’Innocenzio, 2024). TikTok claims that their platform provides over 224,000 jobs to Americans (Kaloï, 2024). While many are concerned about TikTok and its alleged connection to adversarial organizations or its collecting of data, many Americans also rely on

the platform to grow and sustain their businesses, or careers altogether. Businesses rely on other social media companies besides TikTok for revenue, such as Facebook, Instagram, and X. Like with a TikTok ban, many businesses may see social media regulation as hurting their bottom line. They believe government actions to control social media will only stifle its growth and ability to help businesses thrive in the e-commerce marketplace.

Congressional Action

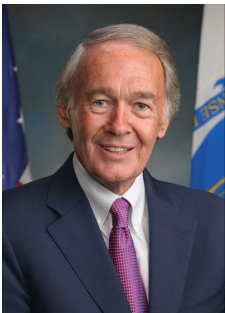
Due to the rapidly changing nature of social media, Congress has not passed much legislation addressing these issues, and the legislation that has been enacted primarily focuses on using social media data for law enforcement purposes, protecting minors, and curbing online sex trafficking, such as the Revising Existing Procedures via Technology (REPORT) Act (Congress.gov, 2023).

However, Congress has not completely ignored issues relating data privacy, security, and protection. S 1896, the Algorithmic Justice and Online Platform Transparency Act, introduced by Senator Ed Markey (D-MA), would require social media websites to fully disclose how they collect and use users' personal information and investigate any racial or socioeconomic injustices these algorithms produced (Congress.gov, 2021). Similarly, S 483, the Internet PACT Act, was introduced in 2023. If passed, this policy would have required social media companies to publish their policy regarding content moderation and would have established universal procedures for these companies to follow when removing content posted by users or suspending accounts (Congress.gov, 2023).

Perhaps the most significant action taken by Congress is the **Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act**, which was passed and signed into law in 2024 as part of a larger spending bill HR 815 (Congress.gov, 2024). Colloquially known as the "TikTok ban", this law prohibits social media websites and apps from operating in the United States if they are owned by companies that are connected to "foreign adversary" countries such as China, Iran, Russia, and North Korea. This act specifically targets TikTok, which is owned by Chinese company ByteDance. HR 815 also contains the Protecting Americans' Data from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act of 2024, which bans the sale, rental, trade, or transfer of personal data — including texts, emails, Social Security numbers, financial information, and biometric information — to companies affiliated to the same countries as above (Congress.gov, 2024).

Other Policy Action

State governments have taken significant policy action to protect social media consumers and their data. In 2018, California Governor



*Senator Ed Markey
(D-MA), the author
of the 2021
Algorithmic Justice
and Online
Platform
Transparency Act.
Wikimedia Commons*

Jerry Brown signed the California Consumer Privacy Act into law, which established that social media users have the right to know how their data is collected and distributed by social media companies, the right to delete data collected by these companies, and the ability to opt-out of sharing their information with social media companies. The California law inspired several other states to enact similar legislation (State of California Department of Justice, 2024). The California State Legislature also passed AB 587, which required further disclosure from social media companies about how they moderate content. X challenged this law in court, but a federal judge ruled that the measure withstands legal scrutiny (Calma, 2023).

In 2023, Attorneys General from 42 different US states filed complaints across different courts accusing the company Meta of harming children for using addictive algorithms and exploiting user data (Office of the Attorney General, 2023).

As previously mentioned, Gov. DeSantis in Florida and Gov. Abbott in Texas — both Republicans — signed laws to limit social media companies' ability to moderate content, claiming that conservative content was being censored. Presently, plaintiffs affiliated with Meta, Alphabet, Snapchat, and TikTok are currently challenging these laws to the Supreme Court (Kruzel and Chung, 2024).

In 2023, the Federal Trade Commission proposed new rules for Meta, which would block the company from profiting off data collected from users under the age of 18 (Federal Trade Commission, 2023).



Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, one of the many outspoken Republicans concerned about conservative censorship on social media platforms.

Fortune

IDEOLOGICAL VIEWPOINTS

Conservative View

When it comes to issues surrounding social media, conservatives tend to emphasize censorship and national security. Conservatives are generally against efforts to curb hate speech or disinformation on social media platforms and believe that content moderation infringes upon First Amendment rights and unfairly silences conservative opinions on these platforms (Rainie et. al., 2022). However, fiscal conservatives are usually reluctant to regulate private companies, instead relying on competition to provide the best service to the consumers.

Liberal View

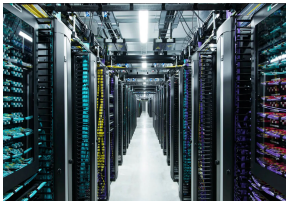
Liberals, on the other hand, emphasize the importance of curbing hate speech, disinformation, and misinformation on social media platforms, and are concerned that foreign adversaries can use these platforms to influence American elections, undermine

institutions, or exacerbate polarization (Democrats.org, 2024). One area where they do tend to agree with conservatives is the desire to prevent foreign companies that may have ties to adversarial governments from controlling social media platforms, although there is larger opposition within the Democratic Party to all-out bans such as the TikTok ban. Liberals also tend to care more about data use and consumer privacy issues compared to their conservative counterparts.

AREAS OF DEBATE

As previously discussed, internet and social media use has contributed to a diverse range of issues. Therefore, there is no singular solution to solve all problems relating to social media data privacy and security. The following section outlines potential actions Congress can take to address these current issues, and their areas of debate. While this list does not encompass every possible solution, this section provides a starting point for which members of Congress should begin to think about and research their strategy to address these issues. Be sure to analyze these areas of debate with your member's views and their constituents' interests in mind.

Increase Consumer Protection



A look inside on of Meta's data centers, where they have hardware that runs their websites and stores data. These facilities can contain sensitive information.

Meta

Perhaps the most direct and favored solution to prevent the exploitation of social media users is increasing regulation of data collection and use. More specifically, Congress could restrict what data social media companies collect from users, and limit how this data can be used or shared with other parties, as well as institute measures to decrease the possibility of data breaches. Congress could pass data privacy and security measures that limit the types of data social media companies can collect. Such measures could also restrict what companies can do with this data — be it developing algorithms, training AI models, academic research, targeted advertising, or otherwise — or limit which outside parties can buy or receive this data. For example, laws could prohibit social media companies from selling user data to third parties such as political consulting firms to prevent another Cambridge Analytica incident. To enforce these policies, Congress can impose large fines for companies guilty of violations. This potential legislation could also mandate companies to delete user data after a certain period to prevent long-term data harvesting and could outline provisions to ensure that data is stored properly, with the necessary encryption, to prevent hackers from leaking sensitive data. Proponents of this solution believe government regulation is the only way to protect user data, while opponents see such action as stifling competition and innovation among social media companies.

Political Perspectives on this Solution

Conservatives' main objection to this approach would be the government's involvement in the private market, which they view as overreach that prioritizes bureaucracy over business growth. Apart from that, they would not have major critiques of measures that safeguard user data. Considering that a coalition of 42 state Attorneys General of Democrats and Republicans launched a campaign to address social media companies' exploitation of young consumers, it is likely that these measures would receive bipartisan support.

Liberals would most likely support policies such as restrictions on the collection and use of consumer data, as they are generally more concerned about these issues than conservatives.

Pseudocode – a step-by-step description of algorithm code using plain text.

Increase Data and Algorithm Transparency

Although individual states and Congress have already made steps in this direction, Congress could further enact transparency requirements over how social media companies collect data and curate content for their users. Congress could pass laws requiring social media companies to fully publicize what data they explicitly collect and how they use that data. Additionally, Congress could mandate that they publicize some of the flowcharts, **pseudocode**, and **source code** that their developers use to create their algorithms that dictate what content users see in their feed and divulge these details in these platforms' terms of service for users to see. This would help streamline the government's ability to directly regulate social media companies. Forcing companies to disclose how their algorithms work or what precise details of data is collected from users would make it easier to diagnose current issues within these topics as guesswork is eliminated. Mandating transparency could help users better understand how their data is being used and how these companies recommend content to them, which enables them to be more conscious and responsible users, while social media companies become more responsible towards consumers and the government. Proponents of this proposal argue that greater transparency allows consumers to make a better-informed choice about the social media platforms they use. This would promote competition among social media companies, who would be incentivized to safeguard user data in order to draw users to their platform. Opponents believe this regulation could infringe on intellectual property rights and disincentivize innovation in the field. They also express concerns that publicly releasing information like source code could present a security risk by making it easier for malicious actors to exploit vulnerabilities in the systems.

Source code – a text list containing commands compiled into a computer program.

Political Perspectives on this Solution

It isn't entirely clear how conservatives or liberals would feel about these ideas. However, liberals may be more likely to champion these solutions, based on previous legislation introduced in Congress. Nonetheless, conservatives would not have an obvious objection to measures that would increase data and algorithm transparency. Therefore, they would likely support these measures to address their concerns over conservative censorship on social media platforms.

Social media companies, however, would try to challenge these solutions, as they would force these companies to reveal how they curate content to keep users engaged on their platforms. They also may be concerned with competitors gaining access to their code. They may be concerned that revealing this code may lead to further government regulation of their companies.

Fight Foreign Adversarial Influence on Platforms

One action Congress could take to limit the influence of foreign adversarial actors on social media would be to ban American companies from operating within potentially adversarial countries. The foreign operatives who pose as Americans online often reside in the countries they serve. Therefore, instituting a social media **embargo** would mean that these operatives no longer have access to these platforms, as Meta, X, and other American platforms would not be accessible in countries such as China or Russia. Under this policy, much of the propaganda and disinformation posted by these accounts would hopefully cease. Congress could also increase vetting and tighten restrictions on who is allowed to purchase advertisement space on platforms, to prevent adversarial groups from reaching wide audiences on apps through targeted advertisements. These measures, proponents argue, would bolster national security and prevent malicious actors from spreading misinformation and polarization on social media. Those against this proposal believe it immorally censors and invalidates the voices of people from adversarial nations. They fear it could restrict political dissidents and activist groups who live in nations like Russia from spreading their pro-democratic ideas.

***Embargo** – an official ban on trade or other commercial activity with a particular country.*

Political Perspectives on this Solution

Conservatives may be conflicted on these two proposed policies. Some may oppose these policies because they interfere with free market enterprise and free trade. However, in recent years conservatives have supported tariffs and sanctions against adversarial countries, and the recent TikTok ban was an effort first championed by Republicans in Congress with the No TikTok on United States Devices Act (Congress.gov, 2023). Therefore, there is

reason to believe that these conservatives would support additional measures to limit foreign influence on social media.

There is not much indication as to how liberals would perceive these policies, but since liberals are concerned about the dissemination of propaganda and misinformation that could undermine faith in American democracy, they would likely support an embargo or restriction on social media advertising. However, these measures may face larger opposition with liberals, because Democrats were more reluctant to pass the TikTok ban. Democrats generally have younger supporters who use social media more often than older voters, therefore liberals may be more resistant to an embargo or attempts to fully block social media companies from operating in the United States.

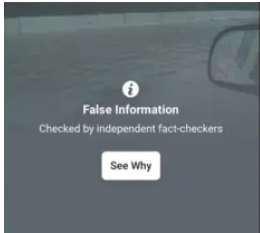
Social media companies, such as Meta, may lobby against this proposed solution, as an embargo would force them to close off their products with potentially millions of users and thousands of businesses and groups in various countries.

Promote Better Content Moderation Practices

If the goal is to curb the spread of hateful, incendiary, or false information on platforms, then legislators could also enact measures to ensure fair, equitable, and universal content moderation standards for social media companies. Congress could pass laws to establish a commission consisting of social media company executives, legal scholars, and free speech advocacy groups to establish common standards for content moderation across platforms. This commission could be granted power to solve disputes or questions of appropriate levels of action taken against accounts or content. If legislators were to pursue this route of solutions, policy would have to be written carefully as to not violate user freedom of speech, as protected by the First Amendment. For example, a reasonable standard to implement may take the form of ensuring that the same false content is being flagged as misinformation across all platforms. Proponents of this solution believe curbing hate speech and misinformation should be main priorities taken by the government since private companies are not properly self-regulating. Opponents argue that content moderation not only violates freedom of speech and expression, but it leaves room for bias and bureaucratic inefficiency.

Political Perspectives on this Solution

Conservatives would most likely be skeptical of this approach. They would be concerned that these content moderation standards would infringe upon First Amendment rights and unfairly target conservative content on social media. Additionally, conservatives traditionally favor small government, and therefore would most likely be against the creation of a government-sponsored



An example of a post on Instagram or Facebook that has been flagged for misinformation. Flagging and fact checking are one of the methods that social media companies moderate content on their platforms.

BBC

commission to regulate the operations of private businesses. Perhaps conservatives could be persuaded to support a commission if legislation ensures ideological inclusion in the selection of commission members.

Liberals would most likely be more inclined to support these policies compared to conservatives. Liberals generally believe misinformation and inappropriate online content are a more salient issue and would be open to taking significant steps to address it. Liberals also believe the government should play a larger role in addressing societal issues, rather than relying on market-based solutions.

BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

Legislation surrounding solutions to current issues with social media privacy, security, and regulation should not impose significant budgetary costs. Rather, these solutions impose costs and restrictions on social media companies more so than the federal government, which may affect tax revenue collected from these companies. Imposing fines on companies in violation of law could increase tax revenue. Consider the larger downstream economic impacts of sanctions and regulation of these social media companies and the businesses that rely on them for data and advertising. It is also important to consider the costs associated with enforcement itself, through the Federal Communications Commission, Federal Trade Commission, Department of Justice, or otherwise, if regulations are passed.

CONCLUSION

Presently, numerous challenges surround social media, its data, security, privacy, and its content. There are concerns about how the data belonging to millions of Americans is collected, used, and distributed by social media companies and other firms. To solve these issues, legislators must consider the perspectives of American users, small businesses, content creators, and social media companies. There is not a single bill that can fix every part of these complex problems at once. Therefore, legislators are encouraged to collaborate to pass multiple bills to address each facet of the issues outlined in this briefing.

While many highlight the numerous critiques of social media, millions of Americans use social media every day as a source of social connection, entertainment, information, and income. It is ubiquitous in American society, and therefore solving these issues is salient to nearly every citizen. It is expected that social media will only become



Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA), the current chair of the Senate Committee on Science, Transportation, and Commerce.

Wikimedia Commons

more integrated with the world. As a result, legislators must act to ensure that each citizen is protected from the threats that social media presents yet maintain the freedom to use these platforms for their own benefit.

GUIDE TO FURTHER RESEARCH

Creating solutions to address these current issues involving social media data use and consumer privacy and safety can be challenging, and therefore legislators may consider researching these issues and their potential solutions further. It may be helpful to watch previous testimony from stakeholders such as social media company executives, business owners, and social media users from congressional hearings. These videos, along with additional proposed bills and passed laws regarding social media and internet data, are available on Congress.gov. It is also recommended that legislators explore the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation to understand the functions of the committee and the current progress on these issues. Furthermore, legislators should browse their own official Senate and campaign web pages, as well as their own social media pages to gain a better understanding of their position on the issues of this briefing. The more legislators understand how their constituents, stakeholders, and Congress view data privacy, security, and consumer protection, the more equipped they will be to solve these related challenges.

GLOSSARY

Algorithm – rules, signals and data that govern a website or app’s operation. They determine how content is filtered and recommended to users.

Artificial Intelligence – computer systems that can perform tasks that normally require human intelligence. This includes text and image generation, as well as decision-making.

Big data – extremely large data sets that can be analyzed computationally to reveal insights about human behavior.

Data breach – an incident in which unauthorized parties gain access to sensitive or confidential information.

Echo chamber – a space in which a person only encounters beliefs or opinions that agree with their own, and therefore their existing beliefs are reinforced while other ideas are not considered.

Embargo – an official ban on trade or other commercial activity with a particular country.

Meta – Meta Platforms, Inc.; a technology conglomerate that owns and operates Facebook, Instagram, Threads, WhatsApp, and other services.

Pseudocode – a step-by-step description of algorithm code using plain text.

Source code – a text list of commands compiled into a computer program.

Terms of service – the legal agreements between a company and a user that the user must agree to if they want to use the company’s service or product.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barrett, Paul, Justin Hendrix, and Grant Sims. “How Tech Platforms Fuel U.S. Political Polarization and What Government Can Do about It.” *Brookings*, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-tech-platforms-fuel-u-s-political-polarization-and-what-government-can-do-about-it/>. Accessed 22 May 2024.
- Bond, Shannon. “China’s Influence Operations against the U.S. Are Bigger than TikTok.” *NPR*, 26 Apr. 2024, <https://www.npr.org/2024/04/26/1247347363/china-tiktok-national-security>. Accessed 29 May 2024.
- Calma, Justine. “Elon Musk’s X Can’t Get around California’s Content Moderation Law, Judge Rules.” *The Verge*, 29 Dec. 2023, <https://www.theverge.com/2023/12/29/24018645/x-twitter-elon-musk-content-moderation-law-california-decision>. Accessed 29 May 2024.
- Chan, Rosalie. “The Cambridge Analytica Whistleblower Explains How the Firm Used Facebook Data to Sway Elections.” *Business Insider*, <https://www.businessinsider.com/cambridge-analytica-whistleblower-christopher-wylie-facebook-data-2019-10>. Accessed 22 May 2024.
- Chung, Andrew. “Court to Weigh State Laws Constraining Social Media Companies.” *Reuters*, 29 Sept. 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/technology/us-supreme-court-weigh-state-laws-constraining-social-media-companies-2023-09-29/>. Accessed 29 May 2024.

- Confessore, Nicholas. “Cambridge Analytica and Facebook: The Scandal and the Fallout So Far.” *The New York Times*, 4 Apr. 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/04/us/politics/cambridge-analytica-scandal-fallout.html>. Accessed 29 May 2024.
- Congress.gov. “H.R.815 - 118th Congress (2023-2024): Making Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for the Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2024, and for Other Purposes.” *Congress.gov*, 24 Apr. 2024, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/815>. Accessed 29 May 2024.
- . “S.85 - 118th Congress (2023-2024): No TikTok on United States Devices Act.” *Congress.gov*, 25 Jan. 2023, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/85>. 2023-01-25. Accessed 29 May 2024.
- . “S.474 - 118th Congress (2023-2024): REPORT Act.” *Congress.gov*, 7 May 2024, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/474>. 2023-02-16. Accessed 29 May 2024.
- . “S.483 - 118th Congress (2023-2024): Internet PACT Act.” *Congress.gov*, 16 Feb. 2023, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/483>. Accessed 29 May 2024.
- . “S.1896 - 117th Congress (2021-2022): Algorithmic Justice and Online Platform Transparency Act”. *Congress.gov*, 27 May 2021, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/1896>. Accessed 29 May 2024.
- De Luce, Dan, and Kevin Collier. “Russia’s 2024 Election Interference Has Already Begun.” *NBC News*, 26 Feb. 2024, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/investigations/russias-2024-election-interference-already-begun-rcna134204>. Accessed 29 May 2024.
- Federal Trade Commission. “FTC Imposes \$5 Billion Penalty and Sweeping New Privacy Restrictions on Facebook.” *Federal Trade Commission*, 24 July 2019, <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2019/07/ftc-imposes-5-billion-penalty-sweeping-new-privacy-restrictions-facebook>. Accessed 29 May 2024.
- . “FTC Proposes Blanket Prohibition Preventing Facebook from Monetizing Youth Data.” *Federal Trade Commission*, 2 May 2023, <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2023/05/ftc-proposes-blanket-prohibition-preventing-facebook-monetizing-youth-data>. Accessed 29 May 2024.
- Goggin, Ben. “Instagram Quietly Rolled out a Misinformation Feature That’s Sparked Claims of Stealth Censorship.” *NBC News*, 13 Dec. 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/social->

- [media/instagram-censor-fact-check-option-setting-ig-palestine-palestinian-rcna129484](https://www.apnews.com/article/instagram-censor-fact-check-option-setting-ig-palestine-palestinian-rcna129484). Accessed 29 May 2024.
- Goldin, Melissa. “Zoom Says It Isn’t Training AI on Calls without Consent. But Other Data Is Fair Game | AP News.” *AP News*, 9 Aug. 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/fact-check-zoom-ai-privacy-terms-of-service-06ff47e47439c2173390a4ca1389f652>. Accessed 29 May 2024.
- Hadero, Haleluya, and Anne D’Innocenzio. “Big Brands Could Pivot Easily If TikTok Goes Away. For Many Small Businesses, It’s Another Story.” *AP News*, 25 Mar. 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/tiktok-ban-senate-sales-advertising-f5d0f37bcff80dcf2e8eb76277a0e984>. Accessed 29 May 2024.
- Hadero, Haleluya, and Mary Clare Jalonick. “House Passes Possible TikTok Ban in the US, but Don’t Expect the App to Go Away Anytime Soon.” *AP News*, <https://apnews.com/article/tiktok-us-ban-sale-china-congress-de12b4d22aa8095e62cb0982a6e62235>. Accessed 28 May 2024.
- Hulsey, Lynn. “2023 Will Go Down for Record-Setting Number of Data Breaches.” *Governing*, 23 Feb. 2024, <https://www.governing.com/management-and-administration/2023-will-go-down-for-record-setting-number-of-data-breaches>. Accessed 29 May 2024.
- Jeczmien, Shira. “How A U.S. TikTok Ban Could Stomp Out 5 Million Small Businesses.” *Forbes*, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/shirajeczmien/2024/03/25/why-a-us-tiktok-ban-is-a-terrible-idea-for-small-brands-and-creators/>. Accessed 28 May 2024.
- Kaloi, Stephanie. “A US TikTok Ban Could Take a Bite out of Small Businesses.” *BBC*, 25 Apr. 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20240425-us-tik-tok-ban-small-business-creator-revenue>. Accessed 29 May 2024.
- Kelly, Meg, and Elyse Samuels. “How Russia Weaponized Social Media, Got Caught and Escaped Consequences.” *Washington Post*, 18 Nov. 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/11/18/how-russia-weaponized-social-media-got-caught-escaped-consequences/>. Accessed 29 May 2024.
- Klepper, David. “Deep Dive into Meta’s Algorithms Shows That America’s Political Polarization Has No Easy Fix.” *AP News*, 27 July 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/facebook-instagram-polarization-misinformation-social-media-f0628066301356d70ad2eda2551ed260>. Accessed 29 May 2024.
- Kruzel, John, and Andrew Chung. “US Supreme Court Torn over Florida, Texas Laws Regulating Social Media Companies.” *Reuters*, 26 Feb. 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/legal/us->

- [supreme-court-weigh-florida-texas-laws-constraining-social-media-companies-2024-02-26/](#). Accessed 29 May 2024.
- Office of the Attorney General. “AG Campbell Files Lawsuit Against Meta, Instagram For Unfair And Deceptive Practices That Harm Young People | Mass.Gov.” *Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, 24 Oct. 2023, <https://www.mass.gov/news/ag-campbell-files-lawsuit-against-meta-instagram-for-unfair-and-deceptive-practices-that-harm-young-people>. Accessed 29 May 2024.
- Shapiro, Ari, Michael Levitt, and Christopher Intagliata. “How the Polarizing Effect of Social Media Is Speeding Up.” *NPR*, 9 Sept. 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/09/09/1121295499/facebook-twitter-youtube-instagram-tiktok-social-media>. Accessed 29 May 2024.
- State of California - Department of Justice - Office of the Attorney General. “California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA).” *State of California - Department of Justice - Office of the Attorney General*, 13 Mar. 2024, <https://oag.ca.gov/privacy/ccpa>. Accessed 29 May 2024.
- Vergun, David. “Leaders Say TikTok Is Potential Cybersecurity Risk to U.S.” *U.S. Department of Defense*, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3354874/leaders-say-tiktok-is-potential-cybersecurity-risk-to-us/https%3A%2F%2Fwww.defense.gov%2FNews%2FNews-Stories%2FArticle%2FArticle%2F3354874%2Fleaders-say-tiktok-is-potential-cybersecurity-risk-to-us%2F>. Accessed 22 May 2024.
- Winder, Davey. “Warning As 26 Billion Records Leak: Dropbox, LinkedIn, Twitter Named.” *Forbes*, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/daveywinder/2024/01/23/massive-26-billion-record-leak-dropbox-linkedin-twitterx-all-named/>. Accessed 22 May 2024.
- Wong, Belle. “Top Social Media Statistics And Trends Of 2024 – Forbes Advisor.” *Forbes*, 18 May 2023, <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/social-media-statistics/>. Accessed 29 May 2024.