

# Why is the U.S. government so worried about Tik Tok?

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In 2024, Montanans won't be able to download Tik Tok

Anna Johnson - Starting in 2024, [Tik Tok may not be available for users in Montana](#). The state became the first to ban the app, citing privacy concerns as the primary motivator. More than half of U.S. states have banned the app on state-owned devices and the Biden administration has threatened to ban the app in the U.S. if its parent company, ByteDance, doesn't sell its shares. Tik Tok is suing the state of Montana in U.S. District Court saying the ban infringes on a user's right to free speech. The lawsuit will act as a precedent for other states that have expressed interest in banning the app.

By banning Tik Tok, Montana became a central actor in the United States' relationship with China. U.S. lawmakers say Tik Tok, owned by the China-based company ByteDance, is a security threat. They say the Chinese government has the ability to demand sensitive user data from Chinese companies. In addition to privacy concerns, some lawmakers are worried about the potential for the app to be used to promote Chinese misinformation. Because of their ability to influence international politics through their policies, ByteDance is a [non-state actor](#) in the U.S.-China relationship. The company has its own agenda, and it makes decisions that have broader consequences than its own economic future. Tensions between the U.S. and China have been high since China floated several surveillance balloons over the U.S., including one over Montana. While President Biden has tried to steady that relationship, even saying he expects relations to "[thaw](#)" after the recent G7 summit, an extended legal battle with

Tik Tok with more investigation into data privacy and state-sponsored misinformation would further destabilize the relationship.

ByteDance itself has no direct ties to the Chinese government, but that doesn't mean it is entirely independent of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The CCP holds significant power over tech companies in China. In the past, they have [pressured companies to do political favors](#) for the party. China's intelligence laws say organizations based there [must cooperate with state intelligence work and investigations](#). These laws and the lack of limits to the party's power show the CCP's [relational power](#) over companies like ByteDance. While ByteDance holds a lot of power over its users and has some ability to influence policies in their favor, ultimately the economic future of the company is decided by the Chinese government.

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