

1. Mark your confusion.
2. Show evidence of a close reading.
3. Write a 1+ page reflection.

Montana Becomes First State to Ban TikTok

Source: Amy Beth Hansen, *Los Angeles Times*, May 17, 2023

Montana became the first state in the U.S. to completely ban TikTok on Wednesday when Republican Gov. Greg Gianforte signed a measure that's more sweeping than any other state's attempts to curtail the social media app.

The measure is expected to be challenged legally and will serve as a testing ground for the TikTok-free America that many national lawmakers have envisioned.

"Today, Montana takes the most decisive action of any state to protect Montanans' private data and sensitive personal information from being harvested by the Chinese Communist Party," Gianforte said in a statement.

TikTok did not immediately respond to a request for comment, but has said it will fight for Montana residents to be able to use the app.

Some lawmakers, the FBI and officials at other agencies are concerned the video-sharing app, owned by the Chinese tech company ByteDance, could be used to allow the Chinese government to access information on American citizens or push pro-Beijing disinformation. TikTok says none of this has ever happened.

When Montana banned the app on government-owned devices in late December, Gianforte said TikTok posed a "significant risk" to sensitive state data. More than half of U.S. states and the federal government have a similar ban.

On Wednesday, Gianforte also announced he was prohibiting the use of all social media applications tied to foreign adversaries on state equipment and for state businesses in Montana effective June 1. Among the apps he listed are WeChat, whose parent company is headquartered in China; and Telegram Messenger, which was founded in Russia.

The legislation, drafted by the attorney general's office, easily passed through Montana's GOP-controlled Legislature.

Gianforte had wanted to expand the TikTok bill to include apps tied to foreign adversaries, but the Legislature did not send the bill to him until after the session ended, preventing him from offering any amendments.

Montana's new law prohibits downloads of TikTok in the state and would fine any "entity" — an app store or TikTok — \$10,000 per day for each time someone "is offered the ability" to access the social media platform or download the app. The penalties would not apply to users.

Opponents argue this is government overreach and say Montana residents could easily circumvent the ban by using a virtual private network, a service that shields internet users by encrypting their data traffic, preventing others from observing their web browsing and other activities. Montana state officials say geofencing technology is used with online sports gambling apps, which are deactivated in states where online gambling is illegal.

TikTok, which has said it has a plan to protect U.S. users, has vowed to fight back against the ban, along with small-business owners who said they use the app for advertising to help expand their businesses and reach more customers. The ACLU of Montana opposed the bill, arguing it was an unconstitutional restriction of free speech.

The app's fun, goofy videos and ease of use have made it immensely popular, and U.S. tech giants like Snapchat and Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, see it as a competitive threat.

Possible Response Questions

- What are your thoughts about the state of Montana banning TikTok? Explain.
- Did something in the article surprise you? Discuss.
- Pick a word/line/passage from the article and respond to it.
- Discuss a "move" made by the writer in this piece that you think is good/interesting. Explain.