



GOP bill bans kids under 16 from social media to save them from dangerous 'emotional distresses'

Description

EXCLUSIVE: A new bill from Rep. Chris Stewart would bar social media companies from allowing children under the age of 16 to use their platforms, in an attempt to help save the declining mental health of America's youth due to increased use of TikTok, Instagram and other addictive media apps.

Stewart, R-Utah, introduced the "Social Media Child Protection Act," which would require Big Tech companies to verify the age of their users, including by using methods such as ID verification.

It would also give states the authority to bring civil lawsuits on behalf of residents if a company violates the age limit restriction, and creates a "private right of action" for parents on behalf of their children. In addition, the Federal Trade Commission would be in charge of holding Big Tech companies to account and enforcing fines if violations occur.

Stewart told Fox News Digital the idea for the legislation came from a personal experience of a family friend who had a 16-year-old daughter whose last action was to leave a message for a suicide prevention hotline before taking her own life. The congressman, a former Air Force pilot, worked to establish the National Suicide Prevention Hotline, which also helps a great number of U.S. veterans.



Rep. Chris Stewart is introducing legislation that would bar social media companies from allowing children under the age of 16 to use their platforms.
(AP Photo/Andrew Harnik)

After the 988 number was set up, Stewart turned to another crisis that he says is fueling the mental health crisis nationwide: access to addictive social media at too young of an age.

He said the issue first emerged in 2012, when Facebook bought Instagram and began marketing to young girls, and then to young men.

The rise in young Instagram users was combined with Chinese Communist Party-tied app TikTok taking off nationwide, leading to the increase of young Americans access to what the congressman described as “emotional heroin.”

“This [bill] is protecting them from the environment itself and protecting them from the overall immersion that just swallows them up and begins to destroy their value or sense of self-worth,” Stewart explained. “It destroys their sense of hope in the future and makes them feel like, you know, ‘everyone is happy except for me, why aren’t I happy?’ I mean, it’s just a whole list of emotional distresses, and that’s primarily our focus.”

The congressman acknowledged that he “may have to negotiate that to get bipartisan support” on the specific age restriction of 16, but he is confident that Democrats will get on board with some version of his bill.



“We must hold social-media companies accountable for the experiment they are running on our children for profit,” said President Biden in a recent op-ed.
(SAUL LOEB/AFP via Getty Images)

He pointed to President Biden’s recent op-ed in the Wall Street Journal that said Big Tech accountability is an area where “Congress can find common ground” as companies are “pushing content to children that threatens their mental health and safety.”

“We must hold social-media companies accountable for the experiment they are running on our children for profit,” said Biden.

The introduction of the new bill comes just days after U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy said children under the age of 13 are “too young” to be on social media, because children are still “developing their identity.”

“I, personally, based on the data I’ve seen, believe that 13 is too early ... It’s a time where it’s really important for us to be thoughtful about what’s going into how they think about their own self-worth and their relationships and the skewed and often distorted environment of social media often does a disservice to many of those children,” Murthy said in an interview.



“Republicans and Democrats are suspicious of social media for very different reasons,” Rep. Chris Stewart told Fox News Digital.
(Muhammed Selim Korkutata/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images)

“Republicans and Democrats are suspicious of social media for very different reasons,” Stewart told Fox News Digital. “But this is one that, you know, you don’t have to be Republican or Democrat. This is just one where you see that something’s wrong with our youth. This is part of the problem. And if you’re a parent, I think that that kind of brings us to a common bond right now.”

Stewart, who sits on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, called Democratic Rep. Adam Schiff of California, who actively uses TikTok, “foolish” due to the company’s ties to the CCP.

“It’s foolish for anyone, especially in his position, who knows that how China has developed and designed this. It’s foolish for anyone in that position to have a TikTok account and post content,” he said noting that Schiff announced his Senate candidacy on the platform.

Schiff was booted off the Intel Committee by House Speaker Kevin McCarthy last week.

by Kelly Laco

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Date Created

02/05/2023