



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

December 7, 2022

Dear Lieutenant Governor Patrick and Speaker Phelan:

The preservation of the safety and security of Texas is foremost among the duties of our offices. The threat of the Chinese Communist Party to infiltrate the United States continues to grow. While the federal government holds the ultimate responsibility for foreign policy issues, the State also has the responsibility and opportunity to protect itself.

Last session, the Legislature took steps to protect certain physical infrastructure by passing the Lone Star Infrastructure Protection Act. Today, I have directed agencies to take immediate action to protect sensitive information and critical infrastructure from TikTok. When the 88th Texas Legislature convenes next year, the Executive Branch will stand ready to assist in the codification and implementation of any cybersecurity reforms that may be deemed necessary.

TikTok is a video-sharing mobile application with more than 85 million users in the United States. It belongs to a Chinese company called ByteDance Ltd., which employs Chinese Communist Party members and has a subsidiary that is partially owned by the Chinese Communist Party. TikTok harvests vast amounts of data from its users' devices—including when, where, and how they conduct internet activity—and offers this trove of potentially sensitive information to the Chinese government. While TikTok has claimed that it stores U.S. data within the U.S., the company admitted in a letter to Congress that China-based employees can have access to U.S. data. It has also been reported that ByteDance planned to use TikTok location information to surveil individual American citizens. Further, under China's 2017 National Intelligence Law, all businesses are required to assist China in intelligence work, including data sharing, and TikTok's algorithm has already censored topics politically sensitive to the Chinese Communist Party, including the Tiananmen Square protests.

The director of the FBI recently warned that the Chinese government can control TikTok's content algorithm, allowing it to perpetrate influence operations within the United States. In fact, the use of TikTok on federal-government devices is already prohibited by agencies like the U.S. Department of State, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Homeland Security.

Effective immediately, I have ordered every state agency in Texas to ban TikTok on any state-issued devices. In addition, I have given the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the Texas Department of Information Resources until January 15, 2023, to develop a model plan that state agencies can deploy with respect to the use of TikTok on personal devices. Each state

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agency will then have until February 15, 2023, to implement its own policy governing the use of TikTok on personal devices, subject to approval by the DPS Cyber Security division.

This legislative session, we must pass legislation to safeguard our state against threats like TikTok. This includes passing legislation to make permanent the directive I have issued to state agencies, making similar requirements applicable to local government, and providing a mechanism where we are able to add additional software or hardware to a prohibited list for government use. We must work together to stop the Chinese government's efforts to collect, store, and distribute Texans' data and personal information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Abbott". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Greg Abbott
Governor

GA:cf