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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Time's up? Countdown to the TikTok Ban Begins

A major social media platform may say goodbye to the U.S. this weekend. The Supreme Court on Friday rejected an appeal from TikTok regarding a law that would effectively ban the app in the U.S. on Sunday, barring a last-minute divestiture from China-based owner ByteDance. The decision was unanimous and there were no dissents.

It'll be the first time that a large-scale social media platform is shut down as a result of a law going into effect. The Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act is set to make it unlawful for companies in the U.S. to provide services to distribute, maintain or update TikTok unless its U.S. operations are separated from ByteDance, which has drawn questions about its data collection practices and ties to the Chinese government. ByteDance argued the law would violate First Amendment rights, but justices rejected that notion, citing national security concerns.

"There is no doubt that, for more than 170 million Americans, TikTok offers a distinctive and expansive outlet for expression, means of engagement, and source of community. But Congress has determined that divestiture is necessary to address its well-supported national security concerns regarding TikTok's data collection practices and relationship with a foreign adversary," the court said in its decision. "For the foregoing reasons, we conclude that the challenged provisions do not violate petitioner's First Amendment rights."

There are still a long 48 hours until the law becomes official.

Outgoing President Joe Biden said he's leaving the enforcement of the ban up to President-elect Donald Trump, who's set to take office one day after the ban begins following his indoor inauguration Monday. Trump, despite having attempted to ban TikTok during his first term, stated he wants to save the app, adding that he's talked with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the matter. One way he could do so is through an executive order, though it's unclear whether it would withstand legal challenges. Additionally, the law gives Trump—or Biden, before he relinquishes power—the ability to delay the ban for 90 days if progress has been made toward a sale.

Some of those in Congress who oppose the ban sprang into action this week to give the platform more time to find a new owner. Sens. Ed Markey (D-MA), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA) introduced the Extend the TikTok Deadline Act, which would delay ByteDance's deadline to sell by an additional 270 days (or until Oct. 16). However, GOP Sens. Tom Cotton and Pete Ricketts thwarted the bill after objecting to it Wednesday. Markey intends on continuing the battle, saying on X while he's "deeply disappointed" by Friday's ruling, he's "not done fighting to pass my 270 day extension. We need more time."

Public Knowledge, which previously submitted an amicus brief urging the court to strike down the law, continues to believe the TikTok ban sets a dangerous precedent pertaining to free speech. Morgan Wilsmann, a Policy Analyst for the interest group, pointed to the fact one of the TikTok alternatives RedNote is also Chinese-owned, making it "akin to futile whack-a-mole."

Despite opposition, the Supreme Court's ruling did draw support

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from both sides of the aisle. **House Commerce** Chair *Brett Guthrie* (R-KY) and Communications and Technology Subcommittee Chair *Richard Hudson* (R-NC) called SCOTUS' decision "a sober, but important, step toward safeguarding our national security."

"Today's Supreme Court decision affirms what Congress has been saying all along to ByteDance and the Chinese Communist Party: divest or face a ban," the joint statement said. "ByteDance still has the choice to fully divest, so TikTok could continue operating in the United States if they so choose. Regardless of their decision, the Committee will continue to vigorously fight attempts by the CCP to compromise our communications networks and surveil the American people."

House Commerce Committee Ranking Member *Frank Pallone* (D-NJ) echoed those sentiments about wanting to protect the U.S. from national security threats and called on ByteDance to sell TikTok. Pallone made note of the fact TikTok CEO *Shou Zi Chew* is expected to be in attendance at Trump's inauguration. "Spending lavishly to celebrate the President-elect's inauguration, and sending the CEO to sit on the dais does not change federal law or override a unanimous decision by the highest court in the land," he said.

As for how networks and brands will respond, some of the companies **CFX** spoke to don't seem too phased by the looming ban considering their respective presence across different platforms. For example, **ESPN's** "The Pat McAfee Show" streams every episode on TikTok, but it's also on **YouTube**, **ESPN+** as well as the flagship ESPN network. Plus, there are already similar platforms such as **Instagram's** Reels or YouTube Shorts that folks could divert to.

For smaller, independent networks, it's about finding where its audience decides to go in a post-TikTok world. **INSP** VP, Digital Content, Loyalty and Social Media *Tina Lloyd* told CFX it's positioning resources to platforms like Instagram and YouTube for its INSP and **Western Bound** social media supporters. It'll be a similar look to the network's approach it's had for successful TikTok campaigns.

So, who could step in and save the day for TikTok? ByteDance has insisted it's not interested in selling, but interested parties have lined up nonetheless. One of which includes billionaire *Frank McCourt* on behalf of his internet advocacy group **Project Liberty**, which announced in December a consortium of partners dubbed "The People's Bid for TikTok." The group submitted an offer to ByteDance last week, and while the full details of the consortium are unknown, we do know that businessman and "Shark Tank" mainstay *Kevin O'Leary* is part of the bid. O'Leary joined **Fox News'** "America's Newsroom" on Friday morning to discuss the ruling and the status of Project Liberty's effort.

"This is the most interesting, complicated, crazy situation I've ever been involved in," O'Leary said before disclosing that \$20 billion cash is on the table. Will that be enough? Time will tell—tick tock.

WELCOME TO TRUMP 2.0

Monday's inauguration of *Donald Trump* as America's 47th president is expected to bring a rash of changes—and quickly. "There are reports that Trump will quickly issue approximately 100 Executive Orders. If so, we would not be surprised to see one of them dealing with the BEAD program," **New Street Research's** *Blair Levin* wrote in a note Friday. He suggested those changes could potentially include ending the fiber preference, revisions to make spending on satellite broadband more favorable, eliminating some of the requirements around workforce, nixing the low-cost service offering mandate, an end to Buy America requirements and a federal reduction in the high-cost threshold at which states cannot spend more than the amount for an unserved or under-served location. The administration has been fast and furious with nominations, and there's chatter that his **NTIA** pick could be coming soon, with NTIA Administrator *Alan Davidson* to step down from his post Monday. New Street said there are rumors that there could be a mandate to stop BEAD work until NTIA issues new rules, but expressed cynicism because it wouldn't be a good look to slow down work already happening in several red states. "Once the Trump Administration lays out its plans, we will evaluate, based on state reactions, whether there are legal and political reactions that will limit the impact of the new rules. In particular, we will be watching to see whether there are Republican Governors willing to take on Trump (and *Elon Musk*) for narrowing their options for how to spend the money and potentially reducing the amount of funds they are allowed to spend," Levin wrote.

WSJ SAYS PARAMOUNT CONSIDERING '60 MINUTES' SETTLEMENT

The Wall Street Journal is [reporting](#) that **Paramount Global** has discussed settlement options for a \$10 billion lawsuit *Donald Trump* filed over a **CBS** "60 Minutes" interview with VP *Kamala Harris*, citing unnamed sources. The report comes a day after **FCC** Chairwoman *Jessica Rosenworcel* [dismissed](#) a news distortion complaint over the interview by **The Center for American Rights**—though incoming Chairman *Brendan Carr* could revive it. The WSJ said there's no indication Paramount had approached Trump's team about a settlement, but there is concern the administration could complicate the proposed Paramount-**Skydance** merger. Trump filed a \$10 billion lawsuit against CBS, alleging it committed election interference by editing portions of Harris' interview. CBS has repeatedly said it did nothing wrong, with news outlet routinely editing for brevity and clarity.

NEVADA CLEARS BEAD HURDLE

Nevada is the latest state to earn **NTIA** approval for its Final

Proposal, opening the door for it to begin awarding grants to ISPs wanting to build out within its borders. Nevada was allocated more than \$416 million to connect 43,715 unserved and underserved households and businesses. It released its list of provisional winners last month with **SkyFiber Internet** earning the largest share of the pot. It will use more than \$180 million to connect 12,043 locations. Other notable provisional winners include **Amazon Kuiper, AT&T, Cox** and **Stimulus Technologies of Nevada**.

Open Road Detectives, which debuted on Jan. 4 and drove Acorn TV to the biggest day of new sign-ups in its history.

PROGRAMMING

It's awesome, baby! Hall of Fame broadcaster *Dick Vitale* is set to return to the airwaves for the first time since 2023. He'll call the Duke vs Wake Forest men's basketball game Jan. 25 at 4:30pm on **ESPN**. Vitale has battled four different types of cancer in the past 3.5 years, but revealed he was cancer-free earlier this month. He's been with ESPN since the 1979-80 season, joining shortly after the network's launch.

COMCAST ACORN TV PREVIEW


Comcast customers can watch **Acorn TV** from Jan. 20 through Jan 26 for free, with the preview available on both X1 and the Xfinity Stream app. The **AMC Networks**-owned SVOD is normally \$7.99/month for Xfinity customers. The preview includes full access to Acorn's mysteries and crime dramas from around the world. That includes the new season of "Darby and Joan:

EDITOR'S NOTE

Cablefax Daily will not publish Monday, Jan. 20, in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Your next issue will arrive Tuesday, Jan. 21.



CABLEFAX DASHBOARD

Social Media Hits



One day into the latest AMC series to hit Netflix, a promising start.

Top 10 TV Shows in the U.S. Today

4  **5** 

Feel like Rick and Michonne would excel at both squid game and zombie apocalypse.

Recently Added



Simultaneous Senate confirmation hearings today have the look of the NFL Redzone channel



35 NEWS 24/7 **DAY TWO OF CONFIRMATION HEARINGS**
SIX TRUMP NOMINEES TESTIFY TO SENATE INCLUDING RUBIO & BONDI

 **Up Ahead**

- FEB. 3-7:** [NATPE Global and Realscreen Summit](#); Miami
- FEB. 11:** [Fiber Broadband Association Regional Fiber Connect](#); San Antonio
- FEB. 23-25:** [NCTC Winter Educational Conference](#); Atlanta
- FEB. 23-26:** [NTCA's RTIME](#); San Antonio
- MARCH 4-6:** [ACA Connects Summit](#); DC
- MARCH 10-13:** [CableLabs Winter Conference](#); Orlando