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TikTok creators say House ban threatens lives and livelihoods

March 13th 2024, The Washington Post

Small-business owners, educators, activists and young people who use TikTok were scrambling to respond Wednesday after the House approved a proposal to ban the popular app, with many arguing that it plays an increasingly crucial role in the national economy and American public life.

Dozens of TikTok supporters gathered outside the Capitol on Wednesday to oppose the measure, which passed the House with overwhelming support but faces an uncertain fate in the Senate.

More than 7 million American businesses market or sell their products through TikTok, according to the company. According to a study issued Wednesday by Oxford Economics, a financial consultancy, TikTok drove \$14.7 billion in revenue for small-business owners last year and contributed \$24.2 billion to U.S. gross domestic product. The study also found that TikTok supports at least 224,000 American jobs, with the greatest economic impact in California, Texas, Florida, New York and Illinois.

In addition to its economic impact, TikTok has become a huge educational hub. Through its #LearnOnTikTok initiative, the company has partnered with more than 800 public figures, publishers, educational institutions and subject matter experts to bring educational material to the app. TikTok also gives grants to educators and nonprofits that produce educational content.

Even as TikTok has become increasingly important economically, it has drawn fire from policymakers in both parties, who have expressed concern about the content being served to users of the app and about its parent company's ties to China. On Wednesday, Rep. Dan Crenshaw, a Republican, posted to X that "voting against this bill is a vote for the Chinese Communist Party."

Rep. Robert Garcia, a Democrat, who voted against the measure, told a rally of opponents on Tuesday that "any ban on TikTok is not just banning the freedom of expression — you're literally causing huge harm to our national economy." Garcia added that the app is an important connection point for various social groups, including the LGBTQ+ community.

Tiffany Yu, 35, a disability activist in Los Angeles, said banning the app would be especially harmful to disabled people, many of whom have found it to be a lifeline during the isolation of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, which is still keeping public spaces off limits to the most vulnerable people.

"On TikTok, you see ... what is going on in our world," Carly Goddard, a content creator said. And "there is more to worry about in our world than banning an app."

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