

# U.S. Sen. Johnson and colleagues: Call on Gov. Evers to ban TikTok from state government devices

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**WASHINGTON** – On Tuesday, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) joined U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.) and four of their Wisconsin colleagues in a bicameral letter calling on Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers to ban TikTok from Wisconsin government devices. They also called for Governor Evers, who has used TikTok in the past, to delete his TikTok account.

“We write to urge you to ban TikTok from Wisconsin government devices and to lead by example and delete TikTok from your own devices. TikTok is nefarious Chinese Communist Party (CCP) spyware that surveils American citizens, promotes CCP propaganda, and allows the CCP to censor and control Americans’ news and content. The United States Congress and multiple Biden Administration officials have raised concerns about TikTok on national security grounds and even called for a ban. These concerns are not localized at the federal level—this affects the Wisconsin state government and Wisconsinites at large. As governor, you should prohibit this app from state government devices,” **the lawmakers wrote.**

Sen. Johnson and Rep. Gallagher were joined on the letter by Representatives Glenn Grothman (R-Wis.), Bryan Steil (R-Wis.), Scott Fitzgerald (R-Wis.) and Tom Tiffany (R-Wis.)

Read more about the letter in the [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#).

The full text of the letter can be found [here](#) and below.

Dear Governor Evers,

We write to urge you to ban TikTok from Wisconsin government devices and to lead by example and delete TikTok from your own devices. TikTok is nefarious Chinese Communist Party (CCP) spyware that surveils American citizens, promotes CCP propaganda, and allows the CCP to censor and control Americans' news and content. The United States Congress and multiple Biden Administration officials have raised concerns about TikTok on national security grounds and even called for a ban. These concerns are not localized at the federal level—this affects the Wisconsin state government and Wisconsinites at large. As governor, you should prohibit this app from state government devices.

The CCP controls and directs TikTok. TikTok's corporate owner, ByteDance, is a Chinese company and is therefore bound by Chinese law to assist CCP intelligence agencies. ByteDance's editor-in-chief, Zhang Fuping, is a CCP member and chairs the company's Communist Party Committee. In a September 2020 court filing, the Department of Justice described ByteDance's founder and former CEO, Zhang Yiming, as a "mouthpiece for the CCP" and "committed to promoting the CCP's agenda and messaging." President Biden recognizes the threat posed by TikTok. In July 2020, he required all of his presidential campaign staff to delete TikTok from their work and personal phones.

TikTok is a CCP surveillance tool. It tracks cell phone users' data, including user location data, and users' keystrokes, even when not even using the app. The CCP can thus collect sensitive intelligence on Wisconsin government employees and even blackmail or pressure them based on this information.<sup>6</sup> Just last month, Forbes reported that ByteDance planned to use TikTok to track specific Americans' locations for a non-advertising purpose.

Even worse than its data collection, TikTok can use its black box algorithm to promote CCP propaganda and censor content. We have already seen TikTok censor references to the CCP's genocide and reeducation camps in Xinjiang and the Tiananmen Square massacre and block the account of an American Muslim rights activist who criticized the CCP's treatment of Uyghur Muslims before an outcry forced a reverse course. The concern with this algorithm is especially acute given the growing percentage of American adults who use TikTok as their news source. It is inappropriate for the CCP to curate Wisconsin government employees' news feed.

It is not unprecedented for a state governor to ban TikTok on government devices. Last week, South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem issued an Executive Order banning TikTok from the South Dakota state government devices of government employees,

agencies, and contractors. We strongly urge you to follow Governor Noem's lead and examine your own legal authorities to ban TikTok from Wisconsin state government devices.

We further request that you lead by example and immediately delete your own TikTok accounts. Wisconsinites expect their governor to be aware of the dangerous national security threats TikTok poses and to protect them from this avenue for CCP intelligence operations. Knowing the threats posed by CCP control of TikTok, it is irresponsible—at best—for a governor to ignore these risks and promote TikTok through his own use of the app.

If you do not intend to delete your TikTok account or to ban TikTok from government devices, please respond with an explanation of your decision. Thank you for your prompt attention to this vital national security matter.