

U.S. Sen. Johnson: Johnson and Wisconsin Republican delegation persuade UW System to ban TikTok on UW System devices

Posted on Thursday, Jan 26, 2023

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

WASHINGTON – This week, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson joined Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.) and the Wisconsin Republican delegation in a letter to UW System President Jay Rothman urging him to ban TikTok from UW System devices and block it from UW System Wi-Fi and wired networks.

“TikTok is controlled by Chinese parent ByteDance, which is controlled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The CCP can use TikTok to gain access to U.S. user data and covertly manipulate TikTok’s algorithm to control the information U.S. users receive and the news they read. Numerous members of the Biden Administration have acknowledged that TikTok poses a serious national security threat, including FBI Director Chris Wray, CIA Director Bill Burns, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, and ODNI Director Avril Haines...Given well-documented attempts by CCP-affiliated entities to influence American universities, it is especially important that we minimize the reach of TikTok on our campuses,” **the lawmakers wrote.**

Following the letter, the UW system [announced](#) via a spokesman that it would follow part of the lawmakers’ request and restrict TikTok from UW System-owned devices.

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

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

January 23, 2023

President Jay O. Rothman

Madison, WI 53706

Dear President Rothman,

Earlier this month, we were pleased to see Governor Tony Evers respond to our call to ban TikTok on state-issued devices. However, we were disappointed that this ban did not extend to University of Wisconsin System (UW System) devices. Given the widespread recognition that TikTok poses a national security threat, we urge you to ban TikTok from UW System devices and block it from UW System Wi-Fi and wired networks.

TikTok is controlled by Chinese parent ByteDance, which is controlled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The CCP can use TikTok to gain access to U.S. user data and covertly manipulate TikTok's algorithm to control the information U.S. users receive and the news they read. Numerous members of the Biden Administration have acknowledged that TikTok poses a serious national security threat, including FBI Director Chris Wray, CIA Director Bill Burns, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, and ODNI Director Avril Haines. In recent months, the federal government banned TikTok from government devices, as did a majority of states, including Wisconsin earlier this month. Additionally, several universities have banned TikTok from their networks, including the University of Texas at Austin and Auburn University. We strongly urge the University of Wisconsin to heed the same national security warnings that led the U.S., Wisconsin, many other states, and other universities to ban TikTok from employee devices and their networks.

Given well-documented attempts by CCP-affiliated entities to influence American universities, it is especially important that we minimize the reach of TikTok on our campuses. Please respond indicating whether you intend to ban TikTok from UW System devices and block it from UW System Wi-Fi and wired networks. If you do not intend to take these steps, please explain the reasoning for your decisions.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this vital national security matter.