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Update: TikTok Restores Service as President-Elect Trump Plans Executive Order

President-elect Trump announces plans to reinstate the app on Monday, emphasizing a proposal for the U.S. to own 50 percent of TikTok

Technology / **Published On January 19, 2025 06:55 AM /**

Staff Consortium **January 19, 2025**

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Update: Update: TikTok is restoring service to U.S. users after President-elect Trump announced plans to issue an executive order on Monday to reinstate the app. Mr. Trump stated his intention for the U.S. to own 50 percent of TikTok.

Original Article: The popular social media platform TikTok has gone offline in the United States, just hours before a law banning the app was set to take effect. This development has left millions of users in limbo, with many expressing their dismay through final posts on the platform before it went dark.

The law, which requires ByteDance, TikTok's parent company based in China, to divest its ownership or face a ban, was signed by President Joe Biden in April 2024. It stipulates that ByteDance must either sell TikTok to a non-Chinese entity or see the app removed from U.S. app stores and web-hosting services. This ban was upheld by the Supreme Court in a recent ruling, effectively nullifying the hopes of TikTok's continued operation in the U.S. under its current ownership.

In an unexpected turn of events, President-elect Donald Trump has indicated his intention to intervene. In a phone interview with NBC News, Trump stated he would "most likely" grant TikTok a 90-day extension from the ban, saying, "I think that would be, certainly, an option that we look at. The 90-day extension is something that will be most likely done, because it's appropriate. You know, it's appropriate. We have to look at it carefully. It's a very big situation." He added that if he decides to extend the deadline, he would announce it on Monday, the day he is set to take office.

This stance marks a significant pivot for Trump, who during his first term in 2020, attempted to ban TikTok over national security concerns. His executive order at the time aimed to force ByteDance to sell its U.S. assets to an American company within 45 days, but federal courts blocked the move, citing First Amendment violations.

Trump's recent comments come at a time when the political landscape around TikTok has shifted. With the app boasting over 170 million American users, its potential ban has become a contentious issue, especially among younger demographics who form a significant portion of its user base. Trump's engagement with TikTok, including joining the platform to connect with voters during his 2024 campaign, might have influenced his current position.

The Supreme Court's decision, however, has left TikTok's immediate future uncertain. Companies like Apple and Google, which operate app stores, have begun preparations to comply with the law, potentially facing hefty fines if they do not remove TikTok by the deadline. This has led to TikTok informing its users via a pop-up message that the app would be "temporarily unavailable" in the U.S., citing the incoming Trump administration's promise to work on a solution.

TikTok's CEO, Shou Zi Chew, has been actively involved in discussions regarding the app's future, even attending Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate last month to discuss potential resolutions. The law allows the president to extend the deadline by 90 days if a sale is in progress, providing a narrow window for ByteDance to negotiate a sale or for Trump to broker a new arrangement.

Amidst these developments, there's been a notable decline in public support for banning TikTok. A Pew Research Center survey from July and August of the previous year showed that only 32% of Americans supported a government ban, down from 50% in March 2023. This shift in public opinion could influence political decisions moving forward.

Meanwhile, the tech world is watching the developments closely, with other ByteDance-owned applications like CapCut and Lemon8 also facing similar scrutiny and potential bans under the same legislation. The possibility of a last-minute merger proposal with companies like Perplexity AI has been floated to circumvent the ban, though no concrete plans have been publicly confirmed.