

California's governor is trying to crack down on smartphones in schools

California Governor Gavin Newsom has pledged to “get smartphones out of schools.”

“I look forward to working with the Legislature to restrict the use of smartphones during the school day. When children and teens are in school, they should be focused on their studies – not their screens,” he said in a statement on Tuesday.

Newsom plans to work with the California legislature to pass those restrictions by August, *Politico* first reported. That would put California in line with other states that already have strict limits on smartphone use in schools. The move could also be particularly meaningful in California, the nation's most populous state and home to Silicon Valley.

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Momentum is growing across the nation to protect kids from potential harms associated with smartphones and social media – from cyber bullying to body image issues. Schools have been battlegrounds for the issue, with concerns rising over distracted students using their phones during class.

In 2019, Newsom signed legislation that authorizes school districts to limit or completely prohibit students from using smartphones while in school. Newsom aims to go further with new legislation that would establish statewide limits.

Newsom also signed a law in 2022 that pushes social media

companies to increase protections for underage users, including limiting how much data from young people they collect and sell. Last year, he wrote a letter to urging the tech industry to drop a lawsuit challenging that legislation. "It is time for the tech industry to stop standing in the way of important protections for our kids and teens, and to start working with us to keep our kids safe," he wrote.

The governor's new call to action on Tuesday follows the US Surgeon General's plea to Congress on Monday to institute warning labels on social media platforms. "It is time to require a surgeon general's warning label on social media platforms, stating that social media is associated with significant mental health harms for adolescents," Vivek H. Murthy wrote in a guest essay in *The New York Times*.

While Congress is in gridlock, states and school districts have taken their own action. Florida and Indiana already have laws restricting smartphone use. Yesterday, the Los Angeles Unified School District board voted to craft policies to prohibit students from using cell phones and social media throughout the entire school day.

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