Indiana sues TikTok for misleading users on child safety and data security

Indiana's attorney general filed a pair of lawsuits against TikTok on Wednesday, accusing the company of misleading users about its ties to the Chinese government and showing mature content to minors, as first reported by *The New York Times*.

In his first complaint, Attorney General Todd Rokita claimed that TikTok deceived parents on the amount of sexual and drug-related content accessible to young users of the app. In a second complaint, Rokita's office argued that Chinese-owned TikTok wrongfully misled users about the Chinese government's authority to view sensitive user data obtained through the app.

"The TikTok app is a malicious and menacing threat unleashed on unsuspecting Indiana consumers by a Chinese company that knows full well the harms it inflicts on users," Rokita said in a Wednesday statement. "With this pair of lawsuits, we hope to force TikTok to stop its false, deceptive and misleading practices, which violate Indiana law."

TikTok spokesperson Brooke Oberwetter told *The Verge* Wednesday that while the company doesn't comment on ongoing litigation, "the safety, privacy and security of our community is our top priority."

The Indiana suits follow a week of bad news for the popular video-sharing app. Over the last few days, the Republican governors of Maryland, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Texas have all banned the use of TikTok on government devices. The

US Army, Navy, and Departments of Homeland Security and State have also banned use of the app on government-issued devices.

These bans by Republican state leaders could signal more serious action in Washington next year, especially in the GOP-led House. On Tuesday, *The Wall Street Journal* reported that negotiations between TikTok and the Biden administration to mitigate US national security risks were at a standstill. Officials planned to reach an agreement by the end of the year, but a deal may still be farther off on the horizon. Without a formal agreement, Senate and House GOP leaders could push for stronger action against the company.

Responding to national security concerns, Oberwetter said that TikTok was “confident that we’re on a path in our negotiations with the U.S. Government to fully satisfy all reasonable U.S. national security concerns, and we have already made significant strides toward implementing those solutions.”

Despite the flurry of state action, the Indiana lawsuits mark the first time a state has sued TikTok for violating its consumer protection laws.

“In multiple ways, TikTok represents a clear and present danger to Hoosiers that is hiding in plain sight in their own pockets,” Rokita said on Wednesday.

https://www.theverge.com/2022/12/7/23499017/tiktok-china-bytedance-lawsuit-mature-content-national-security