

TikTok could be poised to dodge US ban under Trump

Article

The news: President-elect **Donald Trump** aims to save **TikTok** from a forced sale, reversing his previous stance and opposing a law that gives ByteDance until January 19, 2025 to sell its US operations, per Washington Post reporting.

This marks a significant shift from his previous position in 2020 when he attempted to ban the app.

What's changed? To fight the ban, ByteDance hired Trump insider **David Urban** as part of an [\\$8 million lobbying campaign](#). Key GOP donor and ByteDance investor **Jeff Yass** put pressure on Trump to reverse his earlier position.

- **TikTok has dramatically shifted its approach to content moderation** amid mounting pressure from US lawmakers. Under CEO **Shou Zi Chew**'s leadership, the platform loosened restrictions on political and social discussions, particularly those aligned with conservative viewpoints.
- This year, **TikTok actively courted Fox News**, which quickly amassed 1.4 million followers, highlighting significant demand for conservative content.
- The platform's transformation coincided with **Trump's embrace of TikTok as a campaign tool**—its content garnered over 3 billion views—despite insiders discussing the **Harris campaign's TikTok strategy** far more.

Why it matters: The decision could affect millions of US TikTok users and reshape US-China tech relations.

- **The platform's influence on younger voters makes it a valuable political tool.**
- ByteDance's resistance to selling its algorithm presents ongoing national security concerns.
- The issue highlights the complex intersection of technology, national security, and political interests.

Our take: Trump's reversal appears motivated by political calculations—he is a politician, after all—particularly TikTok's potential value for reaching younger voters. Regardless of his supposed intentions, the path forward remains unclear, as several obstacles persist:

- [Bipartisan support](#) for the divestment law may complicate repeal efforts.
- Legal experts question whether executive actions could effectively block the ban.
- Republican China hawks continue to push for ByteDance's divestment.
- Technical challenges around algorithm ownership remain unresolved.

ByteDance's extensive lobbying campaign demonstrates the high stakes involved but may not address core security concerns.

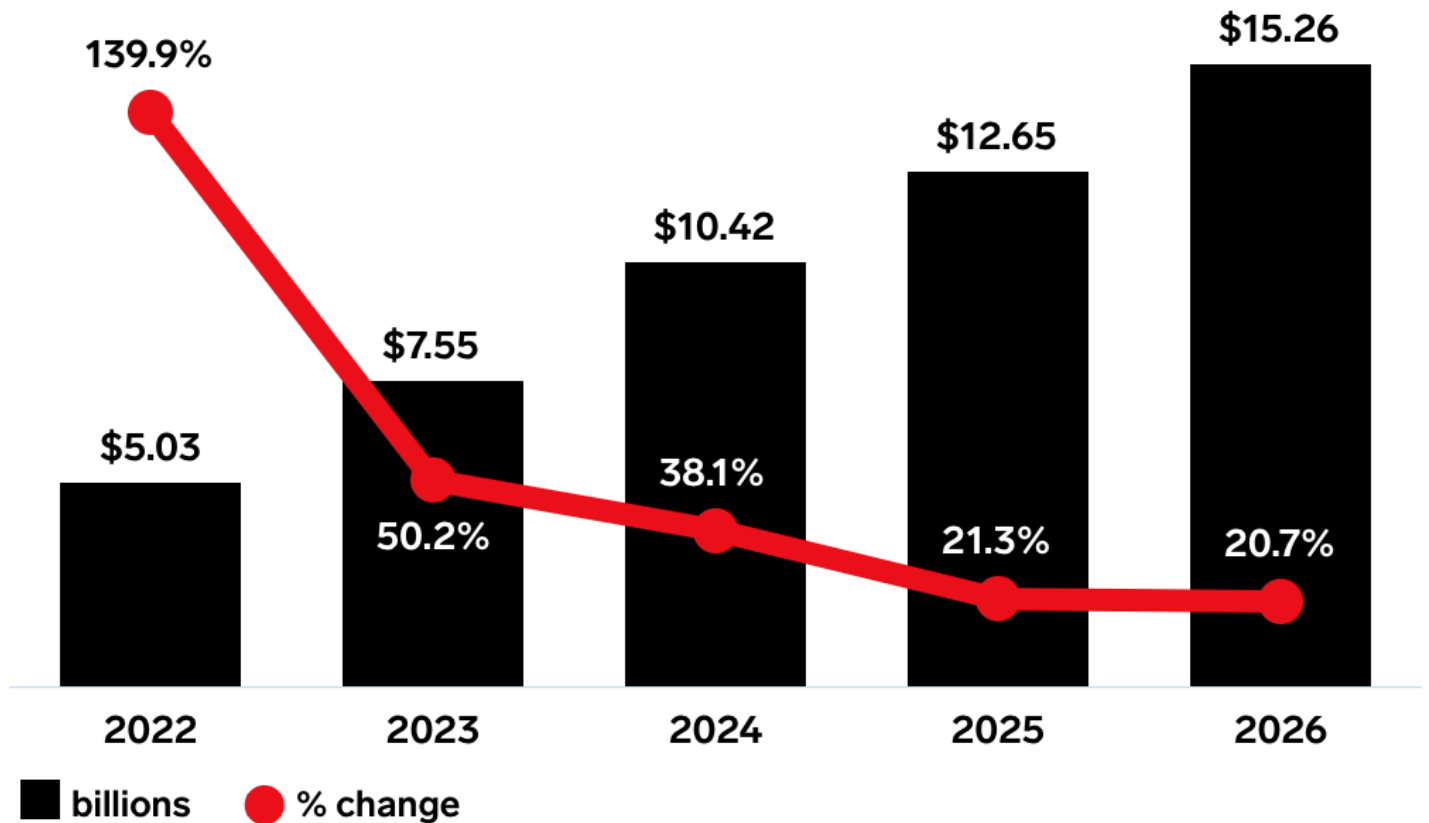
- The platform's reported algorithm adjustments to favor pro-Trump content raise questions about content moderation and political influence.

- Even if Trump succeeds in preventing the ban and protects TikTok's position in the ad landscape, the fundamental issues surrounding data security and foreign ownership will likely continue to demand attention from policymakers and security experts.

Go further: We predicted this would happen if Trump won. See what else we're expecting to occur.

TikTok Ad Revenues

US, 2022-2026



Note: paid advertising only; includes advertising that appears on desktop and laptop computers as well as mobile phones, tablets, and other internet-connected devices, and includes all the various formats of advertising on those platforms; net ad revenues after companies pay traffic acquisition costs (TAC) to partner sites; excludes payments to influencers or other creators to produce sponsored content; includes branded content amplified as paid media

Source: EMARKETER Forecast, March 2024