

# [***Meet The Former Lawmakers Who Helped Spearhead TikTok's Multi-Million Dollar Lobbying Effort On Capitol Hill***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BW9-P0K1-DXXD-73V9-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

[*Link to Image*](https://cdn01.dailycaller.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Photo-By-Bill-ClarkCQ-Roll-Call-212123-e1620755260321.jpg)

President Joe Biden signed a bill Wednesday containing provisions that could ban TikTok in the United States, throwing cold water on the platform's multi-million dollar lobbying effort that utilized former lawmakers in an attempt to influence policy on Capitol Hill.

TikTok and its China-based parent company ByteDance spent $3.1 million lobbying as Congress considered legislation that would force ByteDance to either sell the social media platform or face a ban in the U.S. between January and March, new disclosures [*show*](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1-y3QZ1P7x6wphVdWCu1tZelZO15USUp87R0_64lcwA4/edit?usp=sharing). As part of its multi-million dollar lobbying strategy, TikTok hired two former senators and three former representatives to lobby on its behalf.

The social media platform has repeatedly denied that it has ties to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), yet current and previous Bytedance employees have alleged that TikTok continues to share U.S. users' data with ByteDance, The Wall Street Journal [*reported*](https://dailycaller.com/2024/01/30/tiktok-is-still-sending-american-user-data-to-chinese-parent-company-report/). TikTok frequently [*pushes content*](https://dailycaller.com/2023/12/22/tiktok-data-reveals-content-favors-ccp-goals-new-study/) for users that mirrors the CCP's wider geopolitical agenda, [*according*](https://networkcontagion.us/wp-content/uploads/A-Tik-Tok-ing-Timebomb_12.21.23.pdf) to a recent study by Network Contagion Research Institute and Rutgers University.

Former Republican Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott and former Democratic Louisiana Sen. John Breaux were paid to lobby for TikTok through [*Crossroads Strategies*](https://crshq.com/about/), disclosures [*show*](https://lda.senate.gov/filings/public/filing/021dfb23-6916-45e4-956b-5c3eddac145b/print/). Crossroads Strategies was the tenth largest American lobbying outfit by revenue in 2023, [*according*](https://www.opensecrets.org/federal-lobbying/top-lobbying-firms) to OpenSecrets.

TikTok's lobbying frenzy coincided with Congress' consideration of the [*Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act*](https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/7521), which would have forced ByteDance to sell the platform or face a ban in the United States. Though that law only [*passed*](https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/7521/all-actions?overview=closed&q=%7B%22roll-call-vote%22%3A%22all%22%7D) the House, similar sell-or-ban provisions were included in the foreign aid package [*signed*](https://dailycaller.com/2024/04/24/pentagon-announces-1-billion-ukraine-aid-minutes-biden-signs-national-security-bill/) into law by the president on Wednesday.

Officials from the Chinese embassy reportedly [*tried to set up meetings*](https://dailycaller.com/2024/04/17/china-embassy-lobbied-capitol-hill-tiktok-bill-report/) with congressional staff after the act passed the House, Politico [*reported*](https://www.politico.com/news/2024/04/17/china-lobbying-tiktok-congress-00152819). TikTok was not mentioned when the officials initially made contact, the outlet reported.

Disclosures indicate that Lott and Breaux represented TikTok's interests specifically on the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act, among other legislation.

Former Democratic New York Rep. [*Joe Crowley*](https://www.dentons.com/en/joe-crowley) and former Republican California Rep. [*Jeff Denham*](https://www.dentons.com/en/jeff-denham) both lobbied for TikTok through Dentons, a global law firm, [*according*](https://lda.senate.gov/filings/public/filing/f801584b-d1f3-4205-b119-eb06132c07bc/print/) to disclosures. Dentons was the second largest law firm by [*headcount*](https://www.law.com/international-edition/2023/09/19/the-2023-global-200-ranked-by-head-count/) and the fifth largest by [*revenue*](https://www.law.com/international-edition/2023/09/19/the-2023-global-200-ranked-by-revenue/) as of the 2022 fiscal year, according to Law.com.

[*Link to Image*](https://cdn01.dailycaller.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/GettyImages-2075608549-scaled-e1713396266191.jpg)

People walk past an advertisement featuring the TikTok logo at a train station in Zhengzhou, in China's central Henan province on January 21, 2024. (Photo by Greg Baker/AFP via Getty Images)

Crowley, who Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez [*defeated*](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/26/nyregion/joseph-crowley-ocasio-cortez-democratic-primary.html) in a 2018 primary upset, served as the chair of the House Democratic Caucus.

Another retired representative, Republican [*Rodney Davis*](https://www.cozen.com/people/bios/davis-rodney) of Illinois, also lobbied on behalf of TikTok through the firm Cozen O'Connor Public Strategies, a lobbying disclosure [*shows*](https://lda.senate.gov/filings/public/filing/5ea9319f-817a-40f8-b6e8-6f438cd664b7/print/). Cozen O'Connor is a midsized firm, [*raking in*](https://www.opensecrets.org/federal-lobbying/firms/summary?cycle=2023&id=D000025169) over $8 million in federal lobbying income during 2023 and [*maintaining*](https://copublicstrategies.com/offices/) offices in six cities across the east coast and Midwest.

Disclosures reporting Davis, Crowley and Denham's activities don't list specific legislation, instead saying they lobbied on “related to internet technology [and] regulation of content of platforms.”

Lott, Breaux, Crowley, Davis and Denham didn't respond to the Daily Caller News Foundation's multiple requests for comment.

Some of the former lawmakers voiced criticisms of China while in office, then went on to lobby on behalf of the Chinese-owned platform.

Davis once described China as one of the globe's “bad actors,” calling for tariffs against the country in a 2018 [*interview*](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/videos/2018-06-27/rep-davis-wants-trump-to-focus-on-bad-actors-like-china-video) with Bloomberg. Denham, similarly, [*accused*](https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2018/aug/14/jeff-denham/no-evidence-back-denhams-claim-china-tampered-us-e/) China of meddling with American elections in 2018.

Lawmakers have accused ByteDance of being controlled by the CCP and [*raised*](https://selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/media/press-releases/gallagher-bipartisan-coalition-introduce-legislation-protect-americans-0) concerns that it could use TikTok to [*spy*](https://dailycaller.com/2023/11/05/tiktok-bytedance-srael-palestinian/) on Americans.

The majority of ByteDance and TikTok's expenditures for lobbying between January and March came in the form of in-house lobbyists, disclosures show. ByteDance [*reported*](https://lda.senate.gov/filings/public/filing/f3515200-01b3-4637-823f-7a36492f32f3/print/) spending $2.7 million on influencing public policy between January and March, tapping lobbyists employed by TikTok to do so.

During its first quarter spending spree, ByteDance lobbied both chambers of Congress as well as the Department of Commerce and the Executive Office of the President, disclosures reveal.

On top of the millions it spent trying to shape policy in the halls of Washington, D.C., TikTok spent over $4.5 million on advertisements intended to shift public sentiment against efforts to ban it, CNBC [*reported*](https://www.cnbc.com/2024/04/18/tiktok-doubles-ad-buy-to-fight-potential-us-ban-in-congress.html). TikTok and ByteDance spent over $8 million [*lobbying*](https://www.opensecrets.org/news/2023/07/bytedance-spends-millions-lobbying-outpacing-prior-years-amid-crackdown-on-tiktoks-china-ties/) in 2023, [*according*](https://www.cnbc.com/2024/04/23/bytedance-tiktok-spent-over-7-million-on-lobbying-ad-campaign-.html#:~:text=TikTok%20has%20spent%20over%20%24400%2C000,million%20on%20lobbying%20in%202023.) to the outlet.

Following the failure of its multi-million dollar lobbying campaign, TikTok released a [*statement*](https://twitter.com/TikTokPolicy/status/1783149300471525637) calling the sell-or-ban provisions in the recently passed foreign aid package “unconstitutional.”

“This unconstitutional law is a TikTok ban, and we will challenge it in court,” the statement reads. “We believe the facts and the law are clearly on our side, and we will ultimately prevail.”

[*Mehlman Consulting*](https://lda.senate.gov/filings/public/filing/1ba64e79-83b2-4b30-8401-df072722a478/print/), Dentons, Crossroads Strategies and Cozen O'Connor Public Strategies did not return multiple requests for comment. [*AND Partners*](https://lda.senate.gov/filings/public/filing/b8d693e6-edaf-4c27-9b22-9b840c48e4de/print/), which also lobbied for the app, could not be reached for comment.

TikTok and ByteDance also did not immediately respond to the DCNF's requests for comment.

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**Graphic**

UNITED STATES - MAY 10: Rep. Rodney Davis, R-Ill., leaves the Capitol following the final votes of the week on Thursday, May 10, 2018. (Photo By Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call)

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