

# [***Powerful Dems Trying To Pump The Brakes On TikTok Bill Have Former Staffers Lobbying For The App***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BPM-9T21-DXXD-7011-00000-00&context=1516831)

The Daily Caller

April 2, 2024 Tuesday 11:04 PM EST

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**Section:** ***POLITICS***; us

**Length:** 1053 words

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**Body**

[*Link to Image*](https://cdn01.dailycaller.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/murray-e1549343426508.jpg)

Several Democratic lawmakers who have expressed hesitation regarding a bill that would ban TikTok in the United States unless the platform divests from its Chinese parent company have former staffers lobbying on behalf of the app.

Democratic Sens. Maria Cantwell of Washington, Ron Wyden of Oregon and Patty Murray of Washington have all expressed a desire to proceed slowly with advancing the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act, which would [*force*](https://dailycaller.com/2024/03/13/house-votes-pass-tiktok-ban/) the popular social media platform TikTok to divest from its Chinese Communist Party (CCP)-linked parent company, or face a ban in the United States. However, former high-ranking staffers in each of the senators' offices lobbied on behalf of the app while the senators themselves received campaign contributions from TikTok lobbyists.

The legislation [*arose*](https://selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/media/press-releases/gallagher-bipartisan-coalition-introduce-legislation-protect-americans-0) out of concerns that ByteDance, the China-based and CCP-linked tech company that owns TikTok, could use the app to spy on Americans or otherwise threaten national security. ByteDance has been reported to use the app to [*monitor*](https://dailycaller.com/2023/11/05/tiktok-bytedance-srael-palestinian/) American journalists and to [*track*](https://dailycaller.com/2023/05/05/tiktoks-parent-company-allegedly-tracks-conversations-about-covid-19-lab-leak-theory-report/) communications surrounding the origin of the COVID-19 virus, [***(RELATED: Experts Cheer Bill Compelling Chinese Parent Company To Offload TikTok)***](https://dailycaller.com/2024/03/05/experts-cheer-bill-compelling-chinese-parent-company-offload-tiktok/)

Murray has emerged as a skeptic of the bill, which [*passed*](https://dailycaller.com/2024/03/13/house-votes-pass-tiktok-ban/) the House with bipartisan support in March, saying, “I want to be certain we are weighing the merits of alternative proposals that would deal with the larger issues at hand in a systematic way, while protecting civil liberties, rather than singling out one company,” [*according*](https://www.seattletimes.com/business/wa-lawmakers-back-tiktok-ban-seattle-tiktokers-arent-happy-about-it/) to The Seattle Times.

“I'd like to hear from more experts and discuss some different proposals further,” she [*said*](https://www.krem.com/article/news/politics/tiktok-ban-bill-cathy-mcmorris-rodgers-spokane-reaction/293-1a88e6ab-d556-4c75-9811-e0842b25b095) in a statement to a local news station.

Cantwell, Washington's other senator, is also skeptical of the TikTok bill, signaling that she does not support it in its current form.

“We were trying something a little more robust and long term, but we'll consider this and hopefully we'll figure out how to get the American people something that minimizes data collection and protects them,” she said, [*according*](https://www.politico.com/live-updates/2024/03/14/congress/cantwells-latest-on-tiktok-00147095) to Politico.

Cantwell chairs the Senate Commerce Committee, the body responsible for reviewing the legislation before a floor vote. Cantwell has declined to provide a concrete timeline for the bill and has said that she's considering holding a public hearing on the legislation, Reuters [*reported*](https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-senate-still-considering-public-hearings-tiktok-crackdown-bill-committee-2024-03-20/).

Republican West Virginia Sen. Shelley Moore Capito called Cantwell's desire for an extended committee period “a delay tactic,” [*according*](https://www.foxbusiness.com/politics/senators-slam-delay-tactic-tiktok-bill-despite-national-security-issue) to Fox Business. Republican Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley said the bill is being delayed through the committee process to “kill it.”

Wyden, like Murray and Cantwell, also has reservations regarding the TikTok bill.

“These fields are evolving and changing so rapidly, that you can do a lot of damage by moving too quickly or without the facts,” Wyden said about the bill, [*according*](https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2024/03/15/tiktok-ban-senate-slows-vote-bytedance/) to The Washington Post.

“History teaches us that when lawmakers rush to legislate on tech and social media, mistakes get made,” the senator [*said*](https://twitter.com/RonWyden/status/1768321271945699611) in March. Wyden also expressed concerns about the Chinese government having access to American data.

Wyden doesn't think the app would be better off in the hands of former Trump Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, the senator told Semafor.

“I don't see how America will be any more secure if the next owner of TikTok is a MAGA Trump crony backed by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund,” Wyden [*said*](https://www.semafor.com/article/03/18/2024/senator-ron-wyden-criticizes-mnuchins-tiktok-bid-ties-to-gulf-money).

Alumni of the three senators' offices have taken to Congress to lobby for TikTok.

Ben McMakin, who worked as Murray's top [*legislative staffer*](https://www.linkedin.com/in/ben-mcmakin-0a21494/) for nearly a decade between 1996 and 2005, was lobbying Congress on behalf TikTok through Crossroads Strategies as of the fourth quarter of 2023, disclosures [*show*](https://lda.senate.gov/filings/public/filing/9958a1d3-9117-4cdf-ad28-3ab60fbec898/print/). During his time as a TikTok lobbyist, McMakin represented the app's interests as Congress was considering legislation like the No TikTok on United States Devices Act and the ANTI-SOCIAL CCP Act.

The ANTI-SOCIAL CCP Act would have [*effectively banned*](https://www.rubio.senate.gov/rubio-gallagher-introduce-bipartisan-legislation-to-ban-tiktok/) TikTok while the No TikTok on United States Devices Act [*banned*](https://www.engadget.com/tiktok-us-government-ban-devices-omnibus-bill-funding-nasa-234803320.html) the use of TikTok on federal government devices.

Zachary Mallove, a lobbyist working with [*Mehlman Consulting*](https://mehlmanconsulting.com/team-member/zach-mallove/), also served under Murray for almost ten years, [*finishing*](https://www.linkedin.com/in/zachary-mallove-ba079938/) his stint at her office as a senior advisor. Mallove worked on a team of lobbyists representing TikTok's interests in the areas of artificial intelligence and social media regulation, disclosures [*show*](https://lda.senate.gov/filings/public/filing/4bcb5ca5-0171-4c2e-8d07-b50d51dcacbd/print/).

[*Link to Image*](https://cdn01.dailycaller.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/1243949455-scaled-e1667225988670.jpg)

Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA)

Cantwell and Wyden also have multiple former staffers working on behalf of TikTok.

Rosemary Gutierrez, who [*worked*](https://mehlmanconsulting.com/team-member/rosemary-gutierrez/) as Cantwell's deputy chief of staff and legislative director, is working as a lobbyist for TikTok through Mehlman Consulting, disclosures [*show*](https://lda.senate.gov/filings/public/filing/4bcb5ca5-0171-4c2e-8d07-b50d51dcacbd/print/).

Kim Lipksy, who is [*employed*](https://www.linkedin.com/in/kimlipsky/) as a lobbyist at TikTok and lobbied on behalf of ByteDance, [*according*](https://lda.senate.gov/filings/public/filing/b5c9895d-a72c-4272-b2b3-1b6e7684d5a7/print/) to the corporation's most recent disclosures, served as the staff director of the Senate Commerce Committee under Cantwell.

Squared Communications, a consulting firm founded by former Cantwell chief of staff Michael Meehan, is also reportedly working on behalf of TikTok, unnamed sources [*told*](https://www.politico.com/newsletters/politico-influence/2024/03/13/signal-group-buys-out-wiley-00146851) Politico.

Alex Perkins, who [*served*](https://mehlmanconsulting.com/team-member/alex-perkins/) as counsel to Wyden, is now [*lobbying*](https://lda.senate.gov/filings/public/filing/4bcb5ca5-0171-4c2e-8d07-b50d51dcacbd/print/) for TikTok with Mehlman Consulting. McMakin, the former Murray aide, also worked as Wyden's top legislative staffer between 1995 and 1996.

Wyden, Murray and Cantwell have also received thousands of dollars worth of donations from TikTok and ByteDance lobbyists, disclosures [*show*](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1MMm9DbAIoxBJEOKyMOcyHRSzWxhe7YcMj5GtbuLlGcQ/edit?usp=sharing).

Some senators see addressing the purported dangers of TikTok as an urgent matter that should be brought to the floor as soon as possible.

“Senator Schumer has said that for TikTok to continue, a U.S. company should buy it from ByteDance,” Arkansas Republican Senator Tom Cotton told the Daily Caller News Foundation.

“The responsibility falls on Senator Schumer to live up to his past statements and allow us to move forward in forcing TikTok to divest from the CCP,” Cotton continued. “TikTok's defenders know that this bill would pass the Senate, they're just trying to run out the clock.”

[*TikTok*](https://lda.senate.gov/filings/public/filing/search/?registrant=&registrant_country=&registrant_ppb_country=&client=TikTok&client_state=&client_country=&client_ppb_country=&lobbyist=&lobbyist_covered_position=&lobbyist_conviction_disclosure=&lobbyist_conviction_date_range_from=&lobbyist_conviction_date_range_to=&report_period=&report_year=&report_dt_posted_from=&report_dt_posted_to=&report_amount_reported_min=&report_amount_reported_max=&report_filing_uuid=&report_house_doc_id=&report_issue_area_description=&affiliated_organization=&affiliated_organization_country=&foreign_entity=&foreign_entity_country=&foreign_entity_ppb_country=&foreign_entity_ownership_percentage_min=&foreign_entity_ownership_percentage_max=&search=search#js_searchFormTitle) and [*ByteDance*](https://lda.senate.gov/filings/public/filing/search/?registrant=&registrant_country=&registrant_ppb_country=&client=ByteDance&client_state=&client_country=&client_ppb_country=&lobbyist=&lobbyist_covered_position=&lobbyist_conviction_disclosure=&lobbyist_conviction_date_range_from=&lobbyist_conviction_date_range_to=&report_period=&report_year=&report_dt_posted_from=&report_dt_posted_to=&report_amount_reported_min=&report_amount_reported_max=&report_filing_uuid=&report_house_doc_id=&report_issue_area_description=&affiliated_organization=&affiliated_organization_country=&foreign_entity=&foreign_entity_country=&foreign_entity_ppb_country=&foreign_entity_ownership_percentage_min=&foreign_entity_ownership_percentage_max=&search=search#js_searchFormTitle) collectively spent millions lobbying in late 2023 and 2024, according to disclosures.

The offices of Wyden, Cantwell and Murray did not respond to the DCNF's requests for comment. TikTok and ByteDance also did not respond to requests for comment.

**Graphic**

Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) participates in a mock swearing-in with U.S. Vice President Joe Biden during the opening day of the 115th Congress on Capitol Hill in Washington, U.S., January 3, 2017. REUTERS/Joshua Roberts

**Load-Date:** April 2, 2024

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