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CS 30600: Computers in Society

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Freedom of Speech and TikTok

TikTok is the big-ticket item of the late 2010s. It is an app that allows the users to create short videos on their phone. It is quite popular for covering songs among other things. The app was created by the Chinese company called ByteDance (“Our Products)”. The app has recently received a lot of flak from the U.S. government for spying on its users. TikTok would copy data from Android and Apple devices through the clipboard. What is even more horrifying is that this could be only one of the ways that TikTok is tracking its users (Leonard).

It might seem wise to ban or charge the ByteDance company for this blatant invasion of privacy. Trump did so, requiring that the company stop doing business with the U.S. or it’s citizens. He did this under the presumption that it is a matter of national security as a result of the spying the app may perform. In turn, Trump has received flak and may have put the U.S. in danger for his decision. The consensus is that this ban is a violation of the freedom of speech. Additionally, it might have economic impacts since U.S. companies will no longer be able to do business with them. This ban has wide-reaching effects, damaging the U.S. economy and it’s stature as a moral authority.

This leads one to ask; is our freedom of speech more important than privacy? Should we risk our economy to uphold our basic rights? Should we look past the errors of the companies and enact laws to force them to change their ways?

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