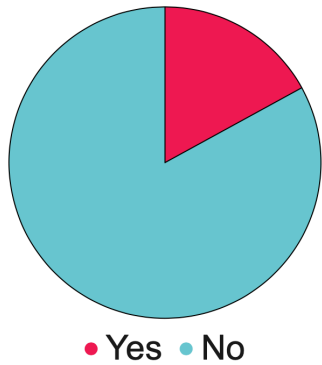


What's Your Opinion?

Should TikTok be banned in the U.S. over national security concerns?

Out of 47 responses:
 Yes -- 8
 No -- 39



Next Poll:

Third Party Voting

Would you ever seriously consider voting for a third party candidate in a presidential election?

Students can answer the poll on The Herald's Instagram page, [@astateherald](https://www.instagram.com/astateherald). Instagram polls are posted on Mondays. Previous poll results can be found on [astatetheherald.com](https://www.astatetheherald.com). Have an idea for a poll? Send your ideas to heraldopinion1921@gmail.com.

These and future articles can be found on the Opinion section of The Herald's website.

TikTok is not a national security threat

ELIJAH TEMPLETON
 OPINION EDITOR



Elijah Templeton is a junior creative media production major from Jonesboro.

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill that would ban TikTok in America if its Chinese owner ByteDance Ltd. does not sell its stake, under a supposed threat to national security.

President Biden has gone on record saying he would sign a bill that bans TikTok if it came across his desk, which has caused concern for its over 170 million U.S. users.

The government's hysteria around TikTok comes from their belief that ByteDance Ltd. ultimately answers to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and will hand over user data on American citizens to a foreign adversary, making TikTok itself a "national security threat."

If signed, this bill would create a process for the president to designate any social media applications under foreign control as national security threats and potentially ban access to them in America.

This ban opens a can of worms granting our government far too much influence over the applications American citizens can use. As a nation that takes pride in personal freedoms for all, this ban would be a massive infringement on those freedoms.

If this bill is signed into law, American citizens will no longer be able to access TikTok if its parent company refuses to cave to governmental pressure, which enforces the lack of control that citizens have on issues like this one.

In a presidential election year, with a border crisis looming and the cost of living being higher than ever before, the only thing gaining bipartisan support in our government is a ban on a social media platform millions of Americans enjoy.

It would be laughable if it was not so sad.

The very idea of freedom has changed in America ever since the signing of the USA Patriot Act into law in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The act allowed government agencies to collect personal records and data on citizens without a judge's approval and with very

few limits.

Since this bill passed, trust in the government has declined immensely, with fewer and fewer people believing the government has their best interests at heart.

This is the case with a potential TikTok ban. It fuels the belief that the U.S. government is concerned solely with a foreign entity having its citizens' data, which is not an easy pill to swallow.

It is far more likely they are fearful of the connection and information sharing possible on TikTok, particularly among young people. Young people can share information about political and social topics that can shape their voting decisions, which are particularly important in an election year.

The news cycle is so dense and ever-changing that it can be difficult to stay

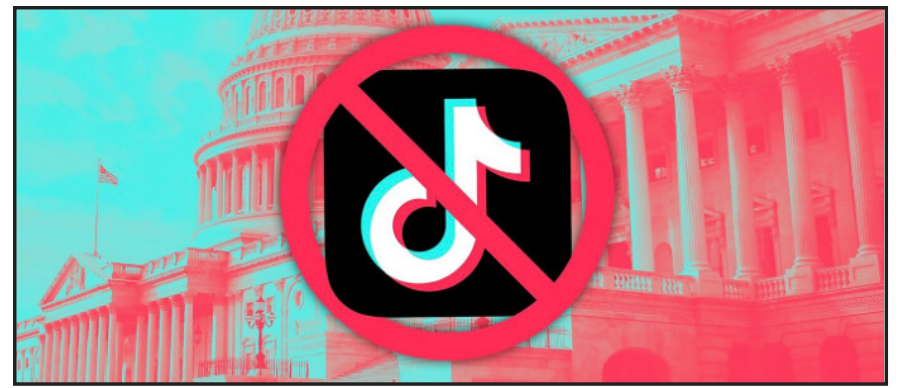
informed on every story that comes out.

This process is made easier through apps like TikTok that allow everyday Americans to share news in a format unaffected by the ever-present media bias and perceived propaganda that functions to mislead the public for political gain.

It is unknown if the TikTok ban will pass the Senate, but if it does, users and creators will be worse off for it.

TikTok should be accessible to all Americans who are willing to use it and our government should not be able to decide what its citizens can do online if we want to continue to champion the freedoms we are afforded as citizens of the United States.

But of course, that's just one man's opinion.



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF CATO.ORG

Artist interpretation of government pressure to ban TikTok.

Hygiene is more important than ever

BENJAMIN MCDOWELL
 STAFF WRITER



Benjamin McDowell is a first-year multimedia journalism major from Wynne, Arkansas.

Hygiene is essential to preventing diseases and illnesses across the world and should be taken seriously in all manners of life, especially in a post-COVID-19 world.

Over the last few years, the coronavirus pandemic caused many to take new precautions in how they lived their lives. They prioritized handwashing, cleaning their homes and even made changes in the places that they traveled to.

As the pandemic has diminished in prominence though, it feels as if the public focus on hygiene has become less important, which opens us up to more risk of illness and disease moving forward.

This risk is especially prominent on places like college campuses where a large number of people are in close proximity to each other day after day, making the potential spread of illness much more of a threat.

There are steps that can be taken to prevent this though and they should be highlighted so everyone can stay safe.

One way to prevent illnesses is by taking care of your body and keeping good hygiene. COVID-19 in particular emphasized the importance of personal hygiene when combating illness and disease.

Handwashing statistics increased during and after the pandemic compared to the years before. According to a study by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), only 47.6% of responders washed their hands more than five times per day before the pandemic, which increased to 82.2% during the pandemic.

Clean hands decrease disease and illness around the world, and a clean world allows everything to run smoothly. This increased awareness of keeping one's hands clean led to many prioritizing clean homes and workspaces as well, which along with the introduction of the vaccine, helped get us through the worst part of the pandemic.

Another way to prevent illness is to make use of the resources provided

to you by your school or work. If your school provides flu shot clinics, use them. If your workplace has hand sanitizer stations, use them whenever you walk by.

These small steps can make big changes in decreasing your risk of sickness and by extension, keep others in your community safe.

As COVID-19 becomes a distant memory for many, people have become more relaxed regarding hygiene and cleanliness. They do not treat the pandemic with as much reverence as they once did and are allowing bad habits to come back into their lives.

The need for personal hygiene today

is more important than any other time in our lives. The threat of widespread illnesses and a pandemic that has not entirely gone away will be a looming threat for years to come.

As spring begins and the spreading of germs and regular allergies becomes more prominent, personal hygiene and cleanliness could be the most important weapons we have to fight against sickness on our college campuses, in our workplaces and beyond.

When everyone takes these small steps together, we can create a massive change and make sure that we are doing our best to keep everyone in our communities as safe as we can.



ARTWORK COURTESY OF HUFFPOST UK

Person washing their hands thoroughly with soap and water.

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