

Don't Fall for Big Tech's Latest Fake Talking Point About "Digital ID"

Age verification protects privacy and bans the retention and sale of personal data

Big Tech companies have built trillion dollar valuations on the backs of their users by harvesting their personal data and selling it to the highest bidder. And for decades, Big Tech-funded lobbyists in Washington, D.C. have defended the companies' right to engage in this unpopular business practice.

But now, suddenly, when a robust age verification bill is within reach – one that puts parents in charge and protects kids from pornography and other harmful material – these same paid advocates cry foul about “privacy” and so-called “Digital ID.” They want to scare Congress into doing nothing because that’s what they’re paid to do. They’re arguing against the status quo *they fought for* and calling it something new and dangerous, pretending that Big Tech companies aren’t already trading around our data the way seven year olds trade around Pokémon cards.

We at American Principles Projects are all for a national conversation about protecting online privacy, but we should not let Big Tech hold age verification hostage before these conversations happen, especially since age verification bills like the SCREEN Act and the App Store Accountability Act(ASAA) go out of their way to protect privacy, while banning the retention and sale of personal identifying data.

Age verification (AV) is safe, necessary, and effective, and it in no way leads to so-called “Digital ID” or mass surveillance.

Under SCREEN and ASAA, the government would not track your digital activity. Two of the strongest AV laws, the [SCREEN Act \(H.R. 1623\)](#) and [App Store Accountability Act \(H.R. 3149\)](#) (ASAA), apply directly to the covered platforms for which AV would be mandated and **only rely on the government for enforcement.** The government wouldn’t handle anyone’s digital proof of identification nor would it track anyone’s online activity.

These bills actually enhance your privacy protections. The SCREEN Act—like the [26 state age verification laws](#) that have already passed—and ASAA go above and beyond to ban the retention of data. **Both establish data security requirements for compliance, ensuring that companies using age verification technology preserve the confidentiality of collected data** and only use it to verify users’ ages. This adds an increased layer of privacy protection that does not currently exist on obscene websites and ensures that Big Tech will no longer profit off minors and consumers writ large.

Big Tech companies are fully equipped to do this. Some Big Tech companies [already practice](#) ASAA’s AV mandates, albeit sparingly. Apple requires government ID verification in “limited circumstances” for commercial activity, whereas Google locks out users who try to change their age to adult until they can verify their ages. These policies perfectly echo ASAA’s statutes requiring users to verify their ages before downloading applications and requiring app stores to obtain parental consent before letting minors download apps. The infrastructure is there, but ASAA will put it into motion.

FAQ:

Is AV Constitutional? **Yes.**

- In [Paxton v Free Speech Coalition](#), the Supreme Court argued that **the First Amendment allows for laws that require age verification in order for citizens to access content that is obscene to minors.**
- The Court reasoned that AV “merely imposes an **incidental burden** on” adults and their “protected speech while **serving the state’s important interest in shielding children from harmful content.**”
- The SCREEN Act is modeled after the Texas law upheld by the Supreme Court.
- The Fifth Circuit [stayed](#) an injunction against Texas’ version of ASAA, **allowing the law to go into effect, furthering the government’s vital interest in protecting children.**

Does AV further endanger user personal data? **No.**

- [93%](#) of pornography websites already leak user data to third-party companies, like Google—[even if users surf in an in-private or incognito browser](#). Porn users should already be aware that their personal data is not safe when they visit these websites.
- AV does not worsen this issue – in fact, the SCREEN Act makes it illegal for a porn website or a third-party to retain or sell personal ID data obtained via the AV process.
- Additionally, **AV will help parents reduce their child’s digital footprint.** Children will be unable to access websites that require AV, and so these websites will not be able to track their activity or access their browser history.

Does AV pave the way for mass surveillance and “Digital ID”? **No.**

- Private companies are already engaging in mass surveillance of online activity. But AV does not create a pathway for any sort of government surveillance. The no retention clauses in the SCREEN Act and ASAA will hinder any surveillance attempts by private actors
- **Similar to real life interactions with a bouncer at a bar, or a cashier at a liquor store, this legislation creates an age checkpoint, not an ID database.**

Do Americans really want age verification? **Yes.**

- An [APP and Cygnal poll](#) from February 2026 shows that **81% of U.S. adults** support “a federal law requiring adult websites to verify all users’ ages so minors cannot access pornographic content” and **83%** support requiring app stores to verify all users’ ages so minors cannot download apps without parental consent.
- A [Marquette Law School poll](#) from July 2025 found that **75% of U.S. adults**—up from **69%** in a February 2025 [Marquette poll](#)—support the Court decisions in *Free Speech Coalition v. Paxton* that ruled Texas’s AV law constitutional.
- In April 2025, YouGov [found](#) that **80%** of U.S. adults “think states should be able to require websites that publish sexual material to verify users’ ages.”
- **More than 90% of parents** worry about their children’s online safety, and more than half agree that politicians aren’t taking this issue seriously enough. **AV will address a core element of parents’ worries.**