

Georgia's Social Media Crackdown Halted Over Human Rights Concerns

June 26, 2025

— Categories: Human Rights



Georgia's effort to impose age verification requirements on social media platforms has been halted after a federal judge determined the law likely violates the First Amendment.

On Thursday, U.S. District Judge Amy Totenberg issued a preliminary injunction preventing the measure from taking effect next week as planned. The law, passed in 2024, would have required social media companies to implement “commercially reasonable” procedures to verify users’ ages and mandate parental consent for anyone under 16 to open an account.

“The state seeks to erect barriers to speech that cannot withstand the rigorous scrutiny the Constitution requires,” Judge Totenberg wrote in her decision. She concluded the law restricts the rights of minors, chills anonymous expression, and limits the ability of users to access information online.

The lawsuit was filed by NetChoice, an industry group representing major online platforms, including Meta and TikTok. The organisation argued the law would irreparably harm its members by forcing them to collect sensitive personal information, creating significant compliance burdens, and undermining free speech.

“Free expression doesn’t end where government anxiety begins,” said Chris Marchese, Director of Litigation at NetChoice. “Parents, not politicians, should guide their children’s lives online and offline. No one should have to hand over a government ID to speak in digital spaces.”

Despite the setback, Georgia officials intend to continue defending the law. Kara Murray, spokesperson for Attorney General Chris Carr, announced plans to appeal, describing the measure as a “commonsense safeguard” aimed at protecting children from the documented mental health risks associated with excessive social media use.

Supporters of the legislation have cited growing concerns about the impact of social media on adolescents, including increased rates of depression, anxiety, and online exploitation. They contend that requiring age verification is similar to restricting minors’ access to age-restricted venues such as bars or casinos.

However, Judge Totenberg emphasised that while those concerns are legitimate, they do not override constitutional protections. She also rejected the state’s argument that NetChoice had delayed its legal challenge, finding the group faced immediate and substantial harm if the law proceeded.

Georgia now joins eight other states, Arkansas, California, Florida, Mississippi, Ohio, Texas, Utah, and Louisiana, where similar laws have been blocked or struck down. Only Tennessee has been permitted to enforce comparable restrictions without interruption.

As the appeal moves forward, Georgia’s law remains suspended, underscoring the complex balance between child safety online and the fundamental right to free expression.