
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 656
Author: Schiavo (D), et al.
Amended: 9/4/25 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE: 13-0, 7/1/25

AYES: Umberg, Niello, Allen, Arreguín, Ashby, Caballero, Durazo, Laird, Stern, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 71-0, 5/19/25 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Account cancellation

SOURCE: Consumer Federation of California

DIGEST: This bill requires large social media platforms to provide users with a clear and accessible mechanism for deleting their accounts and associated personal information.

Senate Floor amendments of 9/4/25 rework the requirements imposed on social media platforms regarding account deletion requests.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA), which grants consumers certain rights with regard to their personal information, including enhanced notice, access, and disclosure; the right to deletion; the right to restrict the sale of information; and protection from discrimination for exercising these rights. It places attendant obligations on businesses to respect those rights. (Civil (Civ.) Code § 1798.100 et seq.)
- 2) Establishes the California Privacy Rights Act of 2020 (CPRA), which amends the CCPA and creates the PPA, which is charged with implementing these

privacy laws, promulgating regulations, and carrying out enforcement actions. (Civ. Code § 798.100 et seq.; Proposition 24 (2020).)

- 3) Provides consumers the right to request that a business delete any personal information about the consumer which the business has collected from the consumer. (Civ. Code § 1798.105(a).)
- 4) Defines “personal information” as information that identifies, relates to, describes, is reasonably capable of being associated with, or could reasonably be linked, directly or indirectly, with a particular consumer or household. It does not include publicly available information or lawfully obtained, truthful information that is a matter of public concern. (Civ. Code § 1798.140(v).)
- 5) Defines “dark pattern” as a user interface designed or manipulated with the substantial effect of subverting or impairing user autonomy, decision making, or choice, as further defined by regulation. (Civ. Code § 1798.140(l).)
- 6) Defines “social media platform” as a public or semipublic internet-based service or application that has users in California and that meets the following criteria:
 - a) A substantial function of the service or application is to connect users in order to allow users to interact socially with each other within the service or application. A service or application that provides email or direct messaging services shall not be considered to meet this criterion on the basis of that function alone.
 - b) The service or application allows users to do specified things, including constructing a profile and creating or posting content viewable by other users. (Business and Professions Code (Bus. & Prof. Code) § 22675 (f).)
- 7) Permits amendment of the CPRA by a majority vote of each house of the Legislature and the signature of the Governor provided such amendments are consistent with and further the purpose and intent of this act as set forth therein. (Proposition 24 § 25 (2020).)

This bill:

- 1) Requires a social media platform to provide a clear and conspicuous button that enables the user to delete their account that meets both of the following:

- a) Is clearly and conspicuously placed as an immediately visible option in the social media platform's settings menu with the words "Delete Account."
 - b) The menu containing the button is accessible in the application, on a browser, or on any other format that a user can use to access the platform.
- 2) Provides that, if a user clicks on the button, the platform must, when the button is clicked, provide a user with the steps necessary to complete an account deletion request, which shall include deletion of the user's personal information. If the social media platform seeks verification of the request to delete the account, that verification shall be done in a cost-effective and easy-to-use manner when the request in paragraph (1) is submitted through preestablished two-factor authentication, email, text message, telephone call, or message.
- 3) Prohibits a social media platform from obstructing or interfering with a user's ability to delete their account, including by using dark patterns.
- 4) Provides that the above request constitutes a request to delete the user's personal information pursuant to the CCPA.
- 5) Provides that a user login to an account for which a request has been submitted shall not, by itself, revoke that request.
- 6) Includes a severability clause and prohibits any waiver hereof.
- 7) Defines the relevant terms, including:
- a) "Clearly and conspicuously" has the same meaning as defined in Section 17601 of the Business and Professions Code.
 - b) "Dark pattern" and "personal information" have the same meaning as in the CCPA.
 - c) "Social media platform" means a social media platform, as defined in Section 22675 of the Business and Professions Code, that generates more than \$100,000,000 per year in gross revenues.

Background

The CCPA, amended by CPRA, grants a set of rights to consumers with regard to their personal information, including the right to delete certain information collected from consumers. Given the reach of social media and the increasing role they play in many children's lives, concerns have arisen over the connection

between social media usage and mental health, drug use, and other self-harming conduct.

This bill seeks to make the process of cutting ties with the largest social media platforms easier and more accessible. It requires platforms to provide users with a clear and conspicuous button that enables them to fully delete their accounts. Requests made by consumers constitute a verified consumer request to delete pursuant to the CCPA. Platforms are prohibited from interfering with these rights, including through the use of dark patterns.

This bill is sponsored by the Consumer Federation of California. It is supported by several advocacy organizations, including Oakland Privacy. This bill is opposed by industry groups, including Technet.

Comments

The effects of social media on our mental health and what should and can be done about it are pressing policy and societal questions that have become increasingly urgent. Evidence shows that engagement on social media has a clear effect on our emotions and overall wellbeing. There is a staggering volume of research and reporting supporting these concerns.¹ By now this is well known to policymakers and the platforms themselves. Facebook’s own internal research found “1 in 8 of its users reported compulsive social media use that interfered with their sleep, work, and relationships— what the social media platform calls ‘problematic use’ but is more commonly known as ‘internet addiction.’”² The amount of time users spend on these platforms is stunning: “On average, people spend about 143 minutes (that's 2 hours and 23 minutes) on social media every day. That's almost 2.5 hours per day spent scrolling through different platforms. Teenagers are the

¹ Adam D. I. Kramer et al., *Experimental Evidence of Massive-Scale Emotional Contagion through Social Networks* (June 17, 2014) Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, vol. 111, No. 24, <https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.1320040111>; Zaheer Hussain and Mark D Griffiths, *Problematic Social Networking Site Use and Comorbid Psychiatric Disorders: A Systematic Review of Recent Large-Scale Studies.* (December 14, 2018) *Frontiers in psychiatry* vol. 9 686, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6302102/pdf/fpsy-09-00686.pdf>; Jeff Horowitz & Deepa Seetharaman, *Facebook Executives Shut Down Efforts to Make the Site Less Divisive* (May 26, 2020) *Wall Street Journal*, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-knows-it-encourages-division-top-executives-nixed-solutions-11590507499>; Georgia Wells et al., *Facebook Knows Instagram Is Toxic for Teen Girls, Company Documents Show* (September 14, 2021) *The Wall Street Journal*, https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-knows-instagram-is-toxic-for-teen-girls-company-documents-show-11631620739?mod=article_inline. All internet citations are current as of June 24, 2025.

² Kim Lyons, *Facebook reportedly is aware of the level of ‘problematic use’ among its users* (November 6, 2021) *The Verge*, www.theverge.com/2021/11/6/22766935/facebook-meta-aware-problematic-use-addiction-wellbeing.

biggest users, especially teenage girls, who spend nearly 3 hours a day on social media.”³

Cutting the cord. Given the addictive relationship that many people have with social media, including many children, it is all the more imperative that the ability to disconnect with platforms be streamlined and easily accessible. While the CCPA currently provides the right to deletion of information collected from a user, research suggests that many platforms purposefully make it difficult to navigate account settings to actually delete accounts and the information associated with them; the report had four main findings:

First, account deletion options vary considerably across platforms and the language used to describe these options is not always clear. Most platforms offer account deletion on desktop browsers but not all allow account deletion from mobile apps or browsers. Second, we found evidence of several dark patterns present in the account deletion interfaces and platform policies. Third, most participants had tried to delete at least one social media account, yet over one-third of deletion attempts were never completed. Fourth, users mostly agreed that they did not want platforms to have access to deleted account data.⁴

This bill addresses the problem by requiring social media platforms to provide users a clear and conspicuous button that enables the user to delete their account. To avoid the issues cited in the above report, this bill makes clear that the option must be accessible in any format that a user can access the platform, must be clearly and conspicuously placed in the settings menu, and platforms are prohibited from using dark patterns to interfere with a user’s ability to delete the account.

This is particularly important given the vast troves of information the platforms collect on users. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) recently issued a report examining the relevant data practices of “Social Media and Video Streaming Services (SMVSSs):

These types of services let you connect with the world from the palm of your hand. At the same time, many of these services have been at the forefront of building the infrastructure for mass commercial

³ Robin Geuens, *What is the average time spent on social media each day?* (Sept. 5, 2024) Soax, <https://soax.com/research/time-spent-on-social-media>.

⁴ Brennan Schaffner, Neha A. Lingareddy & Marshini Chetty, *Understanding Account Deletion and Relevant Dark Patterns on Social Media* (November 11, 2022) Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction, Volume 6, Issue CSCW2, Article No.: 417, Pages 1 – 43, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3555142>.

surveillance. Some firms have unique access to information about our likes and dislikes, our relationships, our religious faiths, our medical conditions, and every other facet of our behavior, at all times and across multiple devices. This vast surveillance has come with serious costs to our privacy. It also has harmed our competitive landscape and affected the way we communicate and our well-being, especially the well-being of children and teens. Moreover, certain large SMVSSs may enjoy significant market power and therefore face fewer competitive constraints on their privacy practices and other dimensions of quality.⁵

The report specifically highlighted the data collection, retention, and use that this bill would protect against:

Many Companies collected and could indefinitely retain troves of data from and about users and non-users, and they did so in ways consumers might not expect. This included information about activities both on and off of the SMVSSs, and included things such as personal information, demographic information, interests, behaviors, and activities elsewhere on the Internet. The collection included information input by users themselves, information gathered passively or inferred, and information that some Companies purchased about users from data brokers and others, including data relating to things such as household income, location, and interests. Moreover, many Companies' data practices posed risks to users' and non-users' data privacy, and their data collection, minimization, and retention practices were woefully inadequate. For instance, minimization policies were often vague or undocumented, and many Companies lacked written retention or deletion policies. Some of the Companies' SMVSSs did not delete data in response to user requests—they just de-identified it. Even those Companies that actually deleted data would only delete some data, but not all.⁶

According to the author:

⁵ *A Look Behind the Screens Examining the Data Practices of Social Media and Video Streaming Services* (September 2024) FTC, <https://www.ftc.gov/reports/look-behind-screens-examining-data-practices-social-media-video-streaming-services>.

⁶ *Ibid.* (emphasis in original).

Social media addiction is harming our youth on a daily basis. From impacts to self-esteem to even more dire consequences, California needs to ensure that those struggling to escape the cycle of addiction can do so easily. Unfortunately, because social media platform revenue relies on continued engagement of users, the steps required to delete an account are not always straightforward, leading many who begin the process to give up part way through. For those already struggling with addiction to a platform, this means returning to a harmful habit. AB 656 will follow recent efforts to simplify subscription cancellation to social media platforms, making it easier for individuals to escape a harmful situation.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: No Local: No

SUPPORT: (Verified 9/5/25)

Consumer Federation of California (Source)
California Civil Liberties Advocacy
Cameo Network
Consumer Attorneys of California
Elder Law & Advocacy
Housing and Economic Rights Advocates
Oakland Privacy

OPPOSITION: (Verified 9/5/25)

California Chamber of Commerce
Computer & Communications Industry Association
Internet Works
Technet

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: Oakland Privacy writes:

There is substantial evidence that social media platforms intentionally make it difficult for users to permanently close and delete their accounts – the reason being that users being on their platforms is part of the fuel that makes their business engines run. Some estimates claim over 200 million people in the U.S. are on social media. These numbers help a company’s stock, attract advertisers and are a revenue generator. Arguably, an inactive user that can still be included in user stats is better than no user at all.

This helps explain why social media companies have made it so difficult for users to close their accounts. Many enlist dark patterns to make the task almost impossible, including forcing a waiting period, having alternate confusing options like deactivating an account instead of deleting it, only giving users the option to do so on certain types of devices, or having to log into your account and dig through multiple layers of settings.

We suggest an additional requirement that social media platforms provide an affirmative confirmation that the deletion of the account has been successfully completed.

Using social media is like checking into Hotel California – *you can check out any time you like, but you can never leave* – but it doesn't have to be that way.

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION: Technet, argues:

Settings tabs on social media platforms can contain any number of options related to a user's social media profile including privacy settings, notification preferences, device permissions, accessibility, language, downloads or data archives and more. Depending on the length of the menu, some platforms group settings related to a user's account in an account management center. This grouping is to put similar settings together in one place and make it easier for consumers to find. Our proposed amendment below would allow a platform to determine the best place for the deletion mechanism, either in the full settings list or an account management center.

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 71-0, 5/19/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Elhawary, Fong, Gabriel, Garcia, Gipson, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Bains, Dixon, Ellis, Flora, Gallagher, Jeff Gonzalez,
Papan, Tangipa

Prepared by: Christian Kurpiewski / JUD. / (916) 651-4113
9/8/25 21:18:46

**** **END** ****