

Utah Digital Choice Act

Why do we need this bill?

Social media platforms currently own and profit from individuals' data. This bill would empower users, foster innovation, and enhance online experiences by expanding data portability and competition in social media.

1. Current data portability limitations

Utah's existing data laws require companies to allow users to download some of their personal data, but do not cover their content and interactions with other users. This means account holders don't have full control or a complete record of their online activity. Users risk losing access if hacked, banned, or switching platforms.

2. Lack of competition and innovation

With data exclusively controlled by existing large social media platforms, it is difficult for new platforms and entrepreneurs to onboard users who risk losing their content history and social networks, or to build new online communities.

3. Potential for safer, more enriching experiences

More competition will incentivize social media platforms to focus more on providing safer, age-appropriate, and more enriching user experiences, rather than just optimizing for engagement-driven advertising.

What does this bill do?

Expands data portability

Requires platforms to allow users to download their complete data, including all content and interactions, in a transferable format.

Right to delete

Requires companies to delete all the personal data they have about someone, at that person's request.

Interoperability

Requires platforms to enable ongoing data sharing with other social networks when users grant permission, including content and interactions.

What are the potential benefits of these changes?

Control over data empowers and protects individuals

Users are able to download or share to another platform their complete data—which might include business contacts, personal memories, or a network of relationships—ensuring that the user decides what happens with it and that it cannot be permanently deleted at the discretion of a platform.

Likewise, if an individual no longer trusts a company to hold their personal data, they can ensure it is deleted from that company's servers. Both provisions protect individuals and could provide them greater agency and autonomy.

Data portability improves competition

New social media platforms face barriers to entry because they lack existing users and access to data. By enabling authorized data sharing between platforms, the bill would make it easier for new entrants to onboard new users because they will be able to instantly bring their friends or following lists to the new platform.

If an individual chooses to share data on their interests or interactions with the new platform, they can also see more tailored content. This will enable innovators to compete more effectively with incumbent platforms.

Reshaping incentives for a healthier, safer internet

The ultimate goal is to shift competition in social media away from simply maximizing engagement and advertising revenue, toward creating healthier and more enriching user experiences.

Platforms would need to compete based on the quality of user experience rather than just their ability to retain user attention or hold captive users who do not control their data. For example, platforms may compete on providing more age-appropriate experiences, especially for kids, as the bill could enable them to build better content moderation and age-verification systems.