

**From:** Randy J. Cress, Assistant County Manager / CIO

**Date:** January 1, 2023

**Title:** Policy for ban of TikTok and other products from County owned devices and network.

**Overview:**

TikTok is a video-sharing mobile application with more than 94 million users in the United States in 2022 and is owned by a Chinese company, ByteDance Ltd., which has a subsidiary that is partially owned by the Chinese Communist Party.

TikTok can harvest large amounts of data from devices it is installed on including when, where, and how the user conducts Internet activity and on June 30, 2022, TikTok admitted in a letter to nine United States Senators that China-based employees can access U.S. data, even though that data is stored in the United States. Additionally, under China's 2017 National Intelligence Law, all Chinese businesses are required to assist China in intelligence work, including data sharing.

There are also several Chinese companies that produce Telecommunications and Audio/Video equipment, and the use of these products may enable the manufacturer or vendor to:

- Collect sensitive citizen, financial or other business data.
- Enable Business Email Compromise and act as a vector for Ransomware Deployment.
- Conduct effective Cyber-espionage against government entities.
- Conduct surveillance and tracking of individual users.
- Use algorithmic modifications to conduct disinformation or misinformation campaigns.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) maintains a list of communications equipment and services known as the Covered List that are deemed to pose an unacceptable risk to the national security of the United States or the security and safety of United States persons. Use of these products would disqualify the County use of federal grant funding in many cases.

On Thursday, December 29, 2022, the President signed into law, H.R. 2617, the "Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023," containing Division R cited as "No TikTok on Government Devices Act" that bans the use of TikTok on federal government devices with an exception for law enforcement use.

**Recommendation:**

Hardware, software and services from the following vendors will not be used in or connected to any Rowan County Network or installed on any County issued device including but not limited to desktop computers, laptops, tablets, and mobile phones.

- (a) Huawei Technologies Company
- (b) ZTE Corporation
- (c) Hytera Communications Corporation

- (d) Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology Company
- (e) Dahua Technology Company
- (f) AO Kaspersky Lab
- (g) Tencent Holdings, including but not limited to:
  - a. Tencent QQ
  - b. QQ Wallet
  - c. WeChat
- (h) Alibaba products, including but not limited to:
  - a. AliPay
- (i) ByteDance Limited Products, including but not limited to:
  - a. TikTok

**Exceptions:**

Following federal guidance, use of software applications will be allowable for official law enforcement use using dedicated County owned devices not co-mingled with County network accounts.

**Authorization Request to the Board of Commissioners:**

Allow the County Manager to enforce the recommended actions through Policy for the effective ban on specific products and services with Chinese Communist Party and Russian Federation ties to best preserve the safety, security, and privacy of the Citizens of Rowan County.