

**SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**  
**Senator Thomas Umberg, Chair**  
**2025-2026 Regular Session**

AB 656 (Schiavo)  
Version: June 23, 2025  
Hearing Date: July 1, 2025  
Fiscal: No  
Urgency: No  
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**SUBJECT**

Account cancellation

**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.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA), amended by the California Privacy Rights Act (CPRA), grants a set of rights to consumers with regard to their personal information, including enhanced notice and disclosure rights regarding information collection and use practices, access to the information collected, the right to restrict the sale of information, and protection from discrimination for exercising these rights. The CPRA also added in additional protections for “sensitive personal information.” The law also provides 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 and to treat it as a verified consumer request to delete pursuant to the CCPA. Platforms are prohibited from using any dark patterns to interfere with this ability.

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

## **PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE LAW**

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the 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. (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 § 1798.100 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. The CCPA provides a nonexclusive series of categories of information deemed to be personal information, including biometric information, geolocation data, and “sensitive personal information.” 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, decisionmaking, 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 all of the following:
    - i. Construct a public or semipublic profile for purposes of signing into and using the service or application.
    - ii. Populate a list of other users with whom an individual shares a social connection within the system.

- iii. Create or post content viewable by other users, including, but not limited to, on message boards, in chat rooms, or through a landing page or main feed that presents the user with content generated by other users. (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 permit a user to complete a deletion of the user's account but may seek confirmation of the request through immediate two-factor authentication delivered by email, text message, telephone call, or message.
- 3) Prohibits a social media platform from using dark patterns to interfere with a user's ability to delete their account.
- 4) Requires the platform to treat a user's decision to delete an account while logged in to that account as a verified consumer request from a consumer to delete the consumer's personal information pursuant to the CCPA.
- 5) Includes a severability clause and prohibits any waiver hereof.
- 6) Defines the relevant terms, including:
  - a) "Clearly and conspicuously" or "clear and conspicuous" has the same meaning as defined in Section 17601 of the Business and Professions Code.
  - b) "Dark pattern" has the same meaning as defined in subdivision (l) of Section 1798.140 of the Civil Code.
  - c) "Personal information" has the same meaning as defined in subdivision (v) of Section 1798.140 of the Civil Code and any regulations promulgated thereunder.

- d) “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.

## COMMENTS

### 1. The effects of social media

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.<sup>1</sup> 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.’”<sup>2</sup> 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 biggest users, especially teenage girls, who spend nearly 3 hours a day on social media.”<sup>3</sup>

### 2. 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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](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.

<sup>2</sup> 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](https://www.theverge.com/2021/11/6/22766935/facebook-meta-aware-problematic-use-addiction-wellbeing).

<sup>3</sup> 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>.

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.<sup>4</sup>

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, the 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. To ensure no accidental deletion, the bill permits a platform to confirm the request through specified means.

The bill also requires social media platforms to additionally treat a user's decision to delete as a verified consumer request to delete the user's personal information pursuant to the CCPA. 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 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

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<sup>4</sup> 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>.

power and therefore face fewer competitive constraints on their privacy practices and other dimensions of quality.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup>

According to the author:

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.

### 3. Stakeholder positions

The Consumer Federation of California, the sponsor of the bill, asserts:

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<sup>5</sup> *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>.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* (emphasis in original).

The process for consumers to regain ownership of their data is often unnecessarily complex, largely because user data represents a significant revenue source for many of these companies. Since 2020, Facebook and Google have reported advertising revenues of \$86 billion and \$181 billion, respectively. Nevertheless, consumers should not feel coerced into remaining on platforms that no longer provide value to their lives. Users who choose to delete their social media accounts – particularly as a means to combat depression and improve their mental health – should not encounter barriers or feel unduly burdened by the process. Account deletion should be straightforward and accessible, achievable with a single click, at any time and for any reason. Despite this, many platforms impose burdensome procedures, requiring users to complete multiple steps merely to initiate a deletion request. Furthermore, consumers are frequently informed that account deletion may take up to 90 days, creating additional and unnecessary delays.

AB 656 aims to address these concerns by requiring social media platforms to prominently feature a clear and easily accessible button for consumers to delete or suspend their accounts. Additionally, once the consumer initiates the account deletion process, they should not encounter any obstructions or delays, except for a simple and immediate two-factor authentication delivered by email, text, message, phone call, or message. This could be done right now, but far too many companies currently want to make it virtually impossible for somebody to cancel their account. That's wrong and AB 656 will change that for even more California consumers. Again, that's common sense and represents the best practices of industry leaders.

Writing in opposition, a coalition of industry groups, including 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.

Oakland Privacy writes in support:

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.

### **SUPPORT**

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

### **OPPOSITION**

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



### **RELATED LEGISLATION**

#### **Pending Legislation:**

AB 2 (Lowenthal, 2025) increases the penalties that can be sought against a social media platform, as defined, if the platform fails to exercise ordinary care or skill and injures a child. AB 2 is currently in this Committee and is being heard the same day as this bill.

AB 56 (Bauer-Kahan, 2025) requires social media platforms to periodically display a mental health warning label, as specified. This includes a requirement that, upon three hours of cumulative active use and each hour thereafter, that the warning be displayed clearly and continuously for at least 90 seconds, without providing the ability to bypass or click through the warning, in a manner that is clear and legible and that occupies between 75 and 100 percent of the screen or window. AB 56 is currently in this Committee and is being heard the same day as this bill.

#### **Prior Legislation:**

SB 362 (Becker, Ch. 709, Stats. 2023) bolstered the utility and effectiveness of the data broker registry law in myriad ways and strengthened consumers' right to deletion as to data brokers by requiring the creation of an accessible deletion mechanism.

AB 1202 (Chau, Ch. 753, Stats. 2019) established the CCPA.

SB 1348 (DeSaulnier, 2014) would have required a data broker, as defined, that sells or offers for sale to a third party the personal information of any resident of California, to permit an individual to review their personal information and demand that such information not be shared with or sold to a third party. It would have provided consumers with their own enforcement mechanism to hold data brokers in violation accountable. SB 1348 was held in the Assembly Arts, Entertainment, Sports, Tourism, and Internet Media Committee.

### **PRIOR VOTES:**

Assembly Floor (Ayes 71, Noes 0)  
Assembly Privacy and Consumer Protection Committee (Ayes 14, Noes 0)

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