

2026 STATE LEGISLATIVE RECAP



Youth Online Safety & Age Verification

As 2026 state sessions closed, lawmakers continued to debate bills claiming to protect kids online but could require families to share more personal information just to use everyday apps and websites. These proposals raise real privacy and security concerns that would impact everyone, not just kids.

What families should know

Age verification mandates can mean collecting sensitive data like government IDs, facial scans, birth dates, or account-level age signals. That creates new risks for teens, parents, and adults alike: more data collection, more tracking, more unseen third-party vendors gaining access and more chances for personal information to be exposed.



State-by-state snapshot



Alabama — Passed

HB 161 passed and is set to take effect on January 1, 2027. It was presented as a way to protect kids from harmful social media algorithms, but alarmingly, it was lobbied for by the social media companies themselves. The bill creates an easy workaround for those platforms and does little to meaningfully reduce risks.

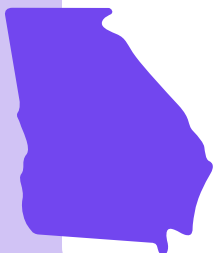
Arizona — Stalled

HB 2991 advanced through the House and saw major Senate changes, but fortunately, stalled before final Senate passage. The bill would have created a centralized identity database — without protections for sensitive data. The amended version removed some of the most concerning age-verification provisions, showing that privacy concerns can reshape these bills.



Georgia — Defeated

SB 467 did not advance, as the bill faced opposition from civil liberties, taxpayer, tech, and parent-focused advocates who warned about privacy, security, and implementation risks. The bill would have required all users to submit personal information to download apps, forcing adults to give up their anonymity to access lawful online content.



Kansas — Defeated

The fierce debate around SB 372 showed continued concern that app store age-verification mandates could burden families, small developers, and user privacy.



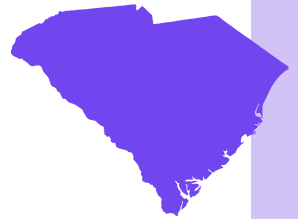
Ohio — Still Active / Fall Watch

Ohio has multiple bills that toy with age verification regimes in the interest of protecting kids online. None have made significant progress, but lawmakers are clearly interested in this approach, making Ohio a state to watch closely.



South Carolina — Defeated

HB 3405 — a bill that would have required app stores to determine the age of every user in South Carolina and obtain verifiable parental consent for every app download or purchase, even for harmless apps such as calculators or Bible apps — carried over but is effectively dead. There may be renewed interest in a new bill, so families and advocates should stay alert.



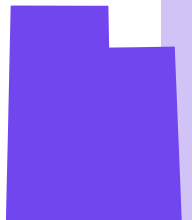
South Dakota — Defeated

HB 1275 passed the House but got struck down in the Senate. The result shows that lawmakers can reject sweeping age-verification mandates when privacy, security, and practical concerns are clearly explained.



Utah — Passed

HB 498 passed, making Utah the first state to pass legislation requiring app stores to verify user ages and obtain parental consent for app downloads. It may serve as a cautionary tale of how states are continuing to experiment with app and family-account rules, even as privacy concerns remain unresolved.



Big takeaway

The 2026 sessions showed strong bipartisan support for protecting kids online, but many proposals are aimed at the wrong target, burdening families instead of bad actors. Amid growing skepticism of invasive age verification, next year offers an opportunity to adjust course. Families want kids to be safer online, but safety should not require every user to hand over more sensitive personal information.