

NBC's 3<sup>rd</sup> *Hour of Today*  
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[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: TikTok CEO to Testify Before Congress]

CRAIG MELVIN: But we do have a lot of ground to cover on this Thursday morning. We're going to start with a debate over whether to ban the most downloaded app in the world. Today, the CEO of TikTok is going to be taking some tough questions on Capitol Hill and NBC's Savannah Sellers has made her way to Washington, D.C. Savannah, good morning to you. What can we expect from this hearing?

SAVANNAH SELLERS: Hey, good morning, everyone! Happy Friday eve. Well, TikTok has been under fire, as you just mentioned. This is over concerns about user data and also whether the app shares it with the Chinese government. Well, today, the head of the company will try to convince lawmakers that it keeps personal information safe, as some of the platform's creators are pleading their case on Capitol Hill.

TIKTOK CEO SHOU CHEW: There are more than 150 million Americans on TikTok.

SELLERS: Ahead of an expected grilling on Capitol Hill, TikTok CEO Shou Chew using the program to directly appeal to its millions of viewers.

CHEW: Some politicians have started talking about banning —

SELLERS: In prepared remarks, Chew plans to highlight TikTok's massive reach, while also addressing concerns about safety and security, saying TikTok will "firewall protected U.S. user data from unauthorized foreign access." And "will not be manipulated by any government." On Wednesday, TikTok creators descending on the Capitol, flown in by the company to explain what a potential ban could mean for them and other users. [TO JARY] Tell me what it would mean if TikTok went away for you, for your life?

KENNETH JARY: Oh, I would be so sad if that went away and I hope it don't happen.

TIKTOK CREATOR: I may not be able to financially support myself anymore.

SELLERS: At issue? TikTok's parent company, ByteDance, and its ties to China. Some critics fear the Chinese government might get access to user data through a national security law requiring companies to turn over any personal data relevant to the country's national security or may even use the app to spread misinformation. Today's hearing comes amid the backdrop of the Biden administration's recent ultimatum to ByteDance: sell its stake in TikTok, or face a U.S. ban. And a Justice Department investigation into a claim the company illegally surveilled journalists, for which TikTok says three employees have been fired.

CONGRESSWOMAN CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS (R-WA): We need to ask some questions. I don't trust what they've been telling us.

SELLERS: For Jason Linton, whose videos on adoption and foster care have nearly 13 million followers, it's changed his life.

JASON LINTON: TikTok has built us a community where we can share so much of the emotions, so much of those moments, so much of the pains, we can share it and we can just encourage one another.

SELLERS: So, of course, the big question here, what's next? Well, don't expect any specific or quick sweeping actions based off of this particular hearing alone. But, of course, there's the backdrop of that investigation we mentioned in there with the Department of Justice and some of the possibilities, that sale of the company, though there's no indication right now that that will happen, or the possible ban the Biden administration had floated. But then there's the question of if there could be political fallout from that in particular with young voters.

MELVIN: Yeah. Savannah, give us just a quick preview here in terms of the hearing and questions that lawmakers might ask the CEO.

SELLERS: It's a great question. So, this is in front of the House Energy and Commerce committee. I spoke with several members of that committee yesterday. They were all pretty tight-lipped about specific questions, but one of the interesting things to watch here is going to be the fact that, look, this is a tech company, a social media giant. How much do these representatives know about its process, about the algorithm? What do those questions end up looking like in that room? The chair of that committee, Representative Rogers, we were able to speak with her yesterday. She said, "we need to just ask some questions. I don't trust what they're telling us." We're going to have to see. There are some members of this community that have some tech experience. They may be able to dig in a little bit on those concerns of data being shared with the Chinese government, as well as that potential, as we mentioned in our story there, about misinformation being spread.

MELVIN: Alright, Savannah Sellers on this one for us in D.C.

AL ROKER: But — but, you know, it's always great, because you'll get one of these senators, congressmen, and they ask some dumb question —

MELVIN: Oh!

ROKER: — every hearing that they've had —

MELVIN: Right

ROKER: — something about technology. So, how do I talk to Dr. Google? How does that work? Tell me about that!

MELVIN: How do it know?

SHEINELLE JONES: How do it know?

DYLAN DREYER: How do it know?

JONES: How do it know?

MELVIN: Yeahh!