

The conflicts in the Middle East are devastating, destructive, and destabilizing. They threaten America's interests and America's allies. Yet President Biden works hard to accommodate our enemies. He is a fair-weather friend to our great ally in the Middle East, Israel. We see that in his maximum-concessions policy towards Iran.

Early on, Biden pushed to rejoin Obama's Iran nuclear deal. He was negotiating to lift all sanctions imposed by President Trump.

The Biden administration's lack of sanction enforcement and use of sanction waivers simply funded the Iranian regime. Iran used this flood of cash to bankroll Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and other terrorists proxies. In turn, the terror proxies attacked America, attacked our allies, and the attacks have only increased since October 7. Iranian proxies have attacked American servicemembers in the Middle East at least 180 times in the past 4 months. Let me say this again—180 attacks on American servicemembers in the last 4 months. We have lost five American troops because of these attacks.

As the Commander in Chief, President Biden bears full responsibility for the continuity of crises that he has created.

It is no surprise that Americans overwhelmingly believe our country is heading in the wrong direction. America needs to change course. Republicans are the party of American strength. We believe in peace through strength, not dependence on our enemies. Americans deserve a President who is strong and a nation that is safe and a nation that is secure. That is our commitment.

So I will tell you, Mr. President, the day I came back from Djibouti, it was very distressing to see the report in the New York Times. They reported that America and this administration have failed to do what it said it would do in terms of Iran selling oil to China—failed. If it hadn't been for the New York Times reporting, the American people wouldn't know because the administration would never tell them that tanker after tanker has moved 59 million barrels of oil from Iran to China. Every one of those tankers ended up in China, and the cash, worth a minimum \$2.8 billion, ended up back in Iran. That is the money Iran has been using to fund these 180 attacks on American servicemembers in the last 4 months.

We know where the money is coming from. Yet Democrats look the other way. The Secretary of Treasury, hapless as she is, came to Congress and testified—inaccurately, possibly misleadingly—that the administration is doing everything they can. Well, they are not. This administration is looking the other way as a hapless and diminished President Biden continues to be outplayed by Iran, and this is evident to the world.

As Joe Biden bungles along, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and communist

China continue on the march. We need a strong President to keep us strong and safe and secure.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

CHILDREN AND TEEN'S ONLINE PRIVACY PROTECTION ACT

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the Children and Teens' Online Privacy Protection Act or, as it is known, COPPA 2.0, the Child Online Privacy Protection Act.

We stand at a truly consequential moment for protecting children online in our country. Our kids are suffering from an acute mental health crisis. The statistics are staggering: One in three high school girls in the United States seriously considered suicide in 2021—one in three teenage girls considered suicide. At least 1 in 10 high school girls attempted suicide in the United States in 2021—1 in 10 teenage girls in America attempted suicide in 2021. Amongst LGBTQ youth, the number is more like one in five LGBTQ youths attempted suicide in 2021.

We know that Big Tech's tracking, targeting, and traumatizing of our young people is contributing in a significant way to that crisis. As the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing just a few weeks ago demonstrated, Big Tech CEOs still don't understand the damage they have caused and remain unwilling to make the necessary changes to fix their platforms and protect children, to protect teenagers, because, without a doubt, self-regulation by the CEOs of the tech companies has failed and failed miserably. Otherwise, we would not be in this mental health crisis.

In the face of this defiance by the industry, policymakers at the Federal, State, and local levels have been introducing and passing new legislation to address the crisis. More notably, last week, the Florida Legislature felt compelled to pass a law to ban all kids under 16 from social media all together in the face of Big Tech inaction. Do you hear what I am saying? Florida is passing a law banning kids under 16 from being on at all.

I am glad that bipartisan lawmakers and regulators have mobilized across the country to address this problem, but we also must be careful because social media is not inherently bad. Many young people have found their voices online and organize there on issues such as the climate crisis and gun violence. Online platforms allow young people to connect with loved ones, share their own experiences, and learn from others in ways that are just unavailable to them offline. They need, in many instances, the online communities. If we shut down those spaces in our efforts to keep children and teenagers safe online, we may just trade one youth mental health crisis for another one.

For most of my career, I have worked to get this balance right—to protect kids from the dangers of new tech-

nologies without undermining the social, the political, and the economic benefits of those very same technologies. There is a Dickensian quality to these qualities. There are the best of technologies and the worst of technologies simultaneously. They can enable, they can ennoble, or they can degrade and debase.

We want the benefits but also have to protect our society—especially young people—against the degradation that has now overcome so many parts of the internet. We just have to find a balance with social media as we have done in many other areas of our country.

Fortunately, we are not writing on a blank slate. The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, the original COPPA, laid the groundwork for protecting kids online by empowering parents and allowing corporate incentives with our policy goals. And unlike more draconian laws from that era, COPPA remains the law of the land. In fact, the only Federal privacy protection for kids online is my law, which passed 26 years ago, which protects kids under the age of 13.

But we can now see that it has expanded beyond anything that people actually thought about in 1998. And in the 26 years since COPPA's passage, much has changed, but at the same time the core principles of that bill still hold the key for protecting young people today. That is why I am fighting so hard to pass COPPA 2.0 and update those privacy policies. And it is why it is worth revisiting the passage of COPPA in 1998 and its successes over the past two decades.

As many of my colleagues remember, the late nineties were an exciting and scary period for technology. This spectacular growth in home internet access ushered in a digital and communications revolution, making it easier than ever to find information, discover new communities, and interact with friends, families, and strangers online. In fact, I am the author of the key three bills that moved America from analog to digital, from narrowband to broadband. I am very proud of that. Not one home had broadband in America in February of 1996, so I am proud of those bills I authored at the time.

We want the benefit of the information superhighway. We want the revolution. But in that early internet period, the possibilities appeared endless: online classrooms, remote work, telehealth services. The internet threatened to upend every aspect of society, and we lawmakers, the public, individuals across the globe—we were now trying to catch up with these changes that the laws that I authored were now ushering in, real changes in commerce, education, and healthcare.

Even in those heady days, however, the dark side of the digital revolution was already apparent, the sinister side of cyber space. Heads rose almost immediately. New personal computers and access to the internet created vast

opportunities for corporate surveillance, allowing the new online platforms to amass large quantities of our personal information and our data with every click, every typed word. Every website visited became another data point in the ever-expanding profiles that websites, web browsers, and other online companies built on their users. This was in the “BF” era, the before Facebook era. Before there ever was a Facebook, they were already doing it. As soon as we moved to broadband, as soon as the three laws passed, the initial companies all moved in that direction. And that is when the Big Tech titans just began to master the lucrative art of targeted advertising, using all of this collected data.

But they understood that our data had value, and they began building huge data collection apparatus. For those of us closely monitoring the digital revolution, online companies’ voracious appetite for our data exposed extreme risk to our privacies. As our social, economic, and political lives increasingly took place online, Big Tech’s near-constant surveillance threatened to expose every part of every life in America to eliminate personal privacy as we know it.

Back in the 1990s, I was deeply concerned about this risk, and I introduced legislation to enact an electronic privacy bill of rights across all technology platforms in our country. And, like today, lobbyists blanketed Capitol Hill, warning that limits on data practices would harm innovation, block the internet revolution, and threaten America’s place as the world’s economic leader.

So my comprehensive privacy bill, even though I got it passed in the House in 1995, which would be in place right now for all Americans, and other privacy legislation, ultimately, all fell victim to this lobbying firestorm. And, 26 years later, we still don’t have a national comprehensive privacy law. We came so close in 1995 and 1996.

But on one aspect of this problem, reason prevailed: children’s privacy. So what I did then, in October of 1998, is I went back to my Republican colleagues, and I said: Well, if we are not going to protect adults and we are not going to protect teenagers, at least let us protect kids in America under the age of 13. Let’s have a child online privacy protection law for those kids. Can I get that from you?

So the law wasn’t perfect, but COPPA fundamentally changed how websites and online services interacted with children. The law, No. 1, prohibited companies from collecting information data on children under the age of 13 without obtaining parental consent. No. 2, it required companies to give parents access to their children’s personal information. And, No. 3, it required companies to post clear privacy policies describing their collection of children’s personal information.

No longer could websites vacuum up children’s data without any parental

consent. No longer could they think of this as a hidden, vast surveillance apparatus without even a disclosure. No longer could they amass troves of data on our kids without parental oversight. All that ended with COPPA, the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998, but only for kids under the age of 13.

But, ultimately, the core problem facing our children, both in the 1990s and even more so today, is Big Tech’s relentless and unyielding drive to accumulate more and more data on its users, including children. And this data may seem vague and uncertain, but it is anything but. It is a child’s name, email address, location, their height, their weight, their health conditions, their fingerprints and facial scan, their likes and dislikes, even their sexual orientation and gender identity.

If you can identify a characteristic of a child, chances are that Big Tech wants to know about it and wants to use it to develop an ever more precise profile on that one specific child to target that child with information that advertisers and others will pay to talk to that child.

Why? Because of targeted advertising. More data means more effective, targeted ads at that child, at that teenager, which means more money for the Big Tech companies, bigger mansions, bigger yachts, bigger superjets for them. But it all comes at the expense of individual children and teenagers all across our country. And the more money they make, it allows the tech giants to invest in new ways to keep our young people glued to their screens.

So the hearings I had in the 1990s were on AI and how AI is going to be used in order to do all of this targeting. I had all of those hearings in the 1990s. It is not new. It is just now on steroids, even worse, even more dangerous.

So the giants are absolutely committed to keeping this continued because the media giants of today are really advertising giants. That is all they are. Data is the fuel for Big Tech’s profit machine and the raw material that sustains Big Tech’s business model.

This endless quest for more data incentivizes Big Tech to maximize user engagement and attention. The formula is very simple: More time on social media means more data to fuel the targeted advertising machine. That means more revenue for Big Tech, coming at the expense of the privacy of teenagers and children in our country.

Addiction equals data, equals money—simple formula. Addiction equals data, equals money. That is their business model. You can put it on a 3-by-5 card. It is not complicated, and it is a lot of money.

In 2022, according to a recent Harvard study, the major Big Tech platforms earned nearly \$11 billion in advertising revenue from U.S. users under the age of 17. So \$11 billion they made off of kids, targeting ads toward them. That

is 11 billion reasons to build ever more sophisticated data profiles on younger users; 11 billion reasons to develop new addictive features; 11 billion reasons to keep our young people clicking, swiping, and liking.

The question then is how to break this self-fulfilling cycle, how to change Big Tech’s incentives to modify their operations to benefit children rather than addict them. The answer is to address the underlying source of the problem: the data that fuels Big Tech’s business model itself.

If Big Tech no longer has an incentive to maximize the data collected on a young person, it will lose the incentive to develop ever-changing methods to addict that child, that teenager to the product in the first place. By breaking the incentive to collect data, we can permanently change Big Tech’s approach to children and to teenagers in our country.

So, back in 1998, my original child online protection bill took a first step to change those incentives. It put up barriers that limited websites’ ability to collect endless data on children, putting parents in control, and, over the past 26 years, the Federal Trade Commission has used its authority under the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act to hold all sorts of companies accountable for invading kids’ privacy.

Using my law from 1998, by 2003—the Federal Trade Commission—it was Mrs. Fields Cookies and Hershey collecting children’s information online without obtaining parental consent. In 2008, it was Sony. In 2019, Google agreed to pay \$170 million for its YouTube channels’ violation of COPPA. And, just last year, Epic Games, Microsoft, and Amazon all agreed to settlements for COPPA violations.

In total, the Federal Trade Commission has held 36 companies accountable thanks to its authority to protect kids online under COPPA, and COPPA’s true impact is so much bigger because those 36 cases that the Federal Trade Commission won are a deterrent to hundreds of companies trying to do the same thing, because they can see how big the penalty will be if they violate the terms of the law.

And then, last year, 33 attorneys general filed claims under COPPA against Meta, against Facebook, for collecting personal data on millions of users that Facebook and Instagram knew were children. They knew they were children. Their algorithms could tell them they were children.

And Meta’s willful blindness toward these users was breathtaking. One internal Meta report estimated that, in 2015, 4 million users on Instagram were under the age of 13, and they knew it. And it represented 30 percent of all 10- to 12-year-olds in the country, and they knew it. They knew what they were doing.

In other cases, Meta employees allegedly declined to conduct research on users that the company knew were

under age 13 because such research would reveal that children used its platforms. They didn't want to know what they knew. They didn't want the documentation to reinforce and prove that they were in violation of the law.

So if it looks like a duckling, swims like a duckling, quacks like a duckling, it is probably a duckling. And that is what these companies are doing. We know. They know. Everybody knows what they are doing.

So the States' complaint makes this clear: Meta knew that Facebook and Instagram were filled with ducklings but deliberately stuck their head in the sand. And, by the way, for people watching, Facebook just changed their name to Meta, but it is still the same. It is still Facebook. It is still Instagram. And they are both owned by Meta.

So thanks to COPPA, Meta is being held accountable for this brazen conduct, for collecting vast quantities of data for its targeted advertising machine without even trying to obtain parental consent at all.

Despite the valiant efforts of the Federal Trade Commission and State regulators, websites and online services have found ways to skirt these privacy protections to amass troves of data on young people and feed their data-fueled business model.

And, most notably, teenagers are unprotected by COPPA. Similarly, the law does not contain strict protections against excessive data collection or targeted advertising by Big Tech.

When I first pushed for COPPA in 1998, I summarized my plan in three words: disclosure, knowledge, and no—disclosure of privacy policies, knowledge of the information collected on our children being reused for other purposes, and the right to say no to the reuse or sale of that information.

Today, the same formula works, except the no. It is now more like a “no, no, no; stop it; end this.”

We have a mental health teenage and child crisis in our country, and the Surgeon General of the United States has pointed the finger at social media: No. Stop it. End it.

And the companies must still disclose their privacy practices to users and still must ensure their parents can access the information collected on their kids and prohibit future use of that information. But we need to adapt. We need to adopt stronger and more aggressive protections to disrupt Big Tech's business model, to provide Big Tech with financial incentives to build healthy platforms for our young people and not these dangerous cesspools that have been created.

And that is why, for over a decade, I have been introducing legislation to crack open Big Tech's business model by prohibiting targeted advertising for kids and teens and to prohibit Big Tech from collecting data on young people beyond what is necessary to provide the service. These provisions—along with raising the COPPA age to cover

teens up to age 17 and preventing online platforms like Meta from pretending their users aren't children or teens—target the perverse incentives with Big Tech's business model. They fix the rot under the floorboards of this whole system, rather than just applying a new layer of paint.

This is the “no, no, no” that this Senate, this country must say to Big Tech, and it is the foundation of my and Senator CASSIDY's COPPA 2.0 legislation, which has now passed through the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee. The committee unanimously, last year, No. 1, said no targeted advertising toward teenagers and children; No. 2, no unnecessary data collection from children and teenagers in our country; No. 3, no deliberately ignoring young users and pretending you don't know that they are young because your algorithms tell you they are young. You know it. You know it, just because of all of the other sites these young people go to. You know who they are.

By addressing the business model, COPPA 2.0 also preserves the real benefits of social media. It allows young people to open accounts, converse with friends and family, find new communities, learn, grow, develop, and take part in rich online spaces.

I have heard from countless young people that these spaces are essential for their own development and growth. So, as policymakers at every level, but especially in this body, we consider different approaches to regulating social media and addressing the youth mental health crisis. We must remember the ultimate source of the whole problem is the data which they collect. We cannot allow them. We cannot permit them to continue to collect that data and then use it to go back and target kids with it.

And any effort to combat this crisis has to include effective reforms to minimize this data collection, enhance privacy protection for young people online, and ban targeted advertising for kids and teens. That is what COPPA 2.0 does. I am deeply proud to lead this legislation with my good friend from Louisiana, Senator CASSIDY, a physician who knows that there is a mental health crisis in our country. And I am thankful for the thoughtful work of Chair CANTWELL and Ranking Member CRUZ on this bill, and I am delighted to say that both have agreed to cosponsor COPPA 2.0.

COPPA 2.0 is bipartisan. It is a commonsense effort to address Big Tech's insatiable appetite for data and their incentive to addict our kids and teens to their platforms by returning to the lessons from the 1990s, which we knew was going to be a problem right from the beginning. We can put an end to Big Tech's impunity. We can turn social media platforms into healthy spaces for our young people. We can finally look our kids in the eye and say: We are making changes for them, to protect them, to deal with this mental health teen and children's crisis in our country.

The surgeon general has pointed the finger at this as a major source of the problem. We have to do something about it. So I urge my colleagues, on a bipartisan basis—and I know it is bipartisan at this time—that we move, and we move rapidly. We have to give relief to parents and families all across our country.

We just can't allow Big Tech CEOs to determine the morality of our country, the values of our country. The technologies should animate our values, not the values of tech CEOs. They should have the values of the American people that are built into it.

So that is my hope. I urge all of my colleagues to support this legislation, and I will just add, parenthetically, that the other thing I was able to do in 1996 was to pass in that bill, the legislation which pays for kids, the poorest kids in America, to be online at their desks in schools. Otherwise, rich kids would have had it, and poor kids would not. So far, that program is a \$75 billion program—\$75 billion—the largest single educational technology program in the history of our country to make sure that poor kids have it on their desk. And for the first time in American history, a new technology was introduced at the same pace for poor kids as the rich kids. But we still have much more work to do to make sure that they can afford it at all, that they can have access to it, because our country is changing, and the technology is helping to change it, and we must keep up with the policies that we know are going to be necessary—especially to protect young people in our country. They are only 20 percent of our population, but they are 100 percent of our future, and we, in the Senate, must act this year to protect them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The Senator from Iowa.

OVERSIGHT INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today I want to take the time of my colleagues to set the record straight, yet again, about an FBI investigative report that has been generated that goes by the number 1023, and I do this because the breathless media misreporting requires that I come to the floor to give a historical reorientation of the facts and the evidence.

As I have said all along on the Senate floor, I and Chairman COMER of the House, made the 1023 document public for this single purpose; that purpose is to force the FBI to do what the taxpayers pay the FBI to do, and that is investigate, in this case, the information contained in that document that goes by the number of 1023.

It is all pretty simple. I didn't promote or vouch for the allegations in 1023 as the truth, like some confused Democrats and the partisan media have falsely said. I pushed the FBI to do their job because that is my responsibility to the taxpayers and the people of Iowa.