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Press Releases

08/26/2026

Attorney General Tong Announces \$17.1 Billion Settlement with Meta, Forces Sweeping Child-Safety Reforms on Instagram and Facebook

Connecticut to Receive up to \$265.4 Million

(Hartford, CT) — Attorney General William Tong today announced a landmark \$17.1 billion **multistate settlement with Meta** Platforms, Inc. that will enforce sweeping new safety reforms to protect American children on Instagram and Facebook. The agreement resolves claims by 51 attorneys general that the company designed Instagram with addictive features, knowingly exposed young users to serious mental harms, and intentionally misled the public about the safety of its platforms, among other things. This settlement is a monumental victory for the protection of America's children and will fundamentally transform how the entire social media industry designs products for kids and teens.

Connecticut will receive up to \$265.4 million, with at least half of all funds directed to remediate youth harms from social media, including but not limited to support for mental health and crisis intervention, after school and summer school programming, and implementation of phone-free school zones. This is the largest state settlement with a single defendant in history.

The settlement also resolves the multistate investigation led by Connecticut against Meta for its sharing of nonpublic information about Facebook users with third parties, like Cambridge Analytica, leading up to the 2016 election.

Meta must pay states \$12.19 billion over 10 years. That amount increases to \$17.1 billion contingent on TikTok, YouTube and Snapchat, each facing state enforcement actions and investigations, agreeing to comparable safety terms and monetary relief. The settlement is subject to the approval of United States District Court Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers of the Northern District of California.

"Meta strip-mined the souls of America's children for maximum profit with abusive and addictive features that unleashed a youth mental health catastrophe. That ends now. Connecticut is joining nearly every state and territory in forcing Meta to pay over \$17 billion, and to quickly adopt strong new protections for kids online. This is the largest settlement in American history with a single defendant, reflecting the magnitude of Meta's misconduct and the unprecedented wealth they amassed from it. But this has never been about money. This settlement charts a new course for online safety, enforcing sweeping reforms to fundamentally alter the experience for kids on Instagram and Facebook. Over the next year, and in some instances much sooner, Meta must deploy robust age verification measures, critical caps on time online, parental options to turn off algorithmic feeds and auto-play functions, and content moderation, among other critical reforms. We will aggressively monitor this rollout and will not hesitate to return to court to protect the safety of our kids online. To TikTok, YouTube and Snapchat—our expectations are clear. You're next," **said Attorney General Tong**.

The settlement requires Meta to implement a series of safety features on Instagram and Facebook, including:

- Hard cap daily time limits and "Productive Pauses" for children: for its two platforms, Instagram and Facebook, a combined two-hour daily time limit with mandatory pauses after 15 minutes of continuous use and again at 60 and 90 minutes to interrupt endless scrolling. These limits remain in effect for five years. If Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube adopt comparable terms, the daily limit on each platform will drop to 60 minutes for 10 years.

- "Nighttime blocks" restricting children's access from 12:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m.

- Limited school-time access for children, eliminating push notifications on weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. during the school year.

- Robust age assurance measures to more effectively verify the age of young users.

- Safer, age-appropriate content controls, including stronger safeguards against bullying, content promoting eating disorders, and content related to suicide and self-harm.

- Stronger, more user-friendly parental controls, including options to turn off algorithmic feed and auto-play.

- Limits on social comparison features, including beauty filters and visible "like" counts, that have been linked to poor mental health outcomes in kids and teens.

Both the implementation and efficacy of the features will be regularly assessed by an independent auditor and the settling states.

These are groundbreaking changes to Instagram and Facebook and more significant and comprehensive than previously ordered by any court. And perhaps most importantly, this

settlement represents a down payment toward an industry-wide social media experience that allows kids to connect in a healthy way.

Beginning in 2021, nearly every attorney general in the country cooperated to investigate the social media industry for designing and promoting platforms to children and teens despite known harms. After a bipartisan, nationwide investigation found that Meta designed Instagram's features to addict children while internally documenting the resulting mental health harms and failing to warn parents, attorneys general across the country sued Meta individually or as part of a consolidated federal lawsuit, including Connecticut. This settlement resolves those cases and claims by the other settling states and territories.

Today's settlement sets a floor, not a ceiling, for Meta's legal requirements. This year, Connecticut enacted new legislation to combat youth social media addiction that, in some instances, goes farther than the terms of today's settlement. The legislation prohibits social media companies from exposing minors to addictive algorithms and notifications without parental consent. The law also calls for a series of default settings regarding account privacy, time of use, and notifications, including barring notifications between the hours of 9:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. Parental consent would be required to alter the default settings, among other provisions.

The attorneys general of Alabama, Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Northern Mariana Islands, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming joined the settlement.

Assistant Attorneys General Rebecca Borné, Tess Schneider, Krislyn Launer, Carolyn Ennis, Leland Moore, Julian Quinones, Laura Thurston, Benjamin Abrams, John Neumon, and Michael Woodruff, Paralegal Specialists Casey Rybak and Keylalee Rivera, Deputy Associate Attorney General Michele Lucan, Chief of the Privacy Section, Deputy Associate Attorney General Maura Murphy, Chief of the Special Litigation Section, and Deputy Associate Attorney General Michael Wertheimer, Chief of the Consumer Protection Section, assisted the Attorney General in this matter.

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