



Business / Tech

## 42 state attorneys general demand a Surgeon General warning label for social media apps

By Jason Seher, CNN

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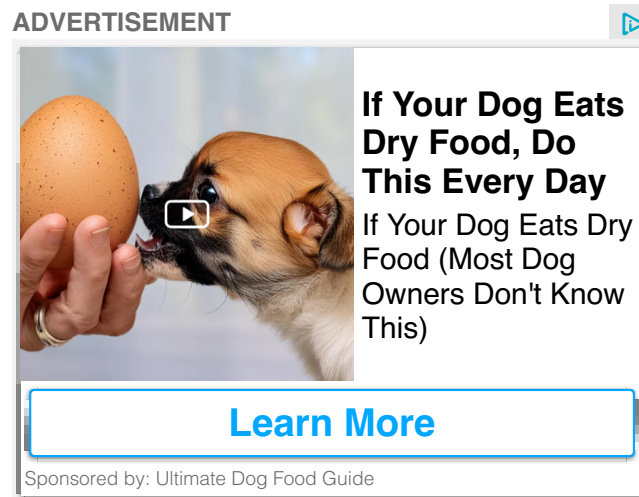
New York Attorney General Letitia James

**(CNN)** — It's hard to get 42 states to agree on much. But a bipartisan group of attorneys general on Tuesday demanded that Congress require Surgeon General warning labels on social media apps to help curtail addiction and a mental health crisis among young adults.

“As state Attorneys General, we sometimes disagree about important issues, but all of us share an abiding concern for the safety of the kids in our jurisdictions — and algorithm-driven social media platforms threaten that safety,” the 42 attorneys general

said in a letter to Congress.

States have taken legal action against a number of social media companies, including Meta and TikTok. But they argue more needs to be done in Washington to alert people to the dangers social media platforms present.



“In addition to the states’ historic efforts, this ubiquitous problem requires federal action — and a surgeon general’s warning on social media platforms, though not sufficient to address the full scope of the problem, would be one consequential step toward mitigating the risk of harm to youth,” the attorneys general said.

The letter echoed much of what Surgeon General Vivek Murthy outlined in a scathing New York Times op-ed in June, that drew a direct comparison between the apps — TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat and others — to cancer causing cigarettes.

Murthy cited several studies, including a 2019 American Medical Association study published in JAMA that showed teens who spend three hours a day on social media double their risk of depression. Teens spend nearly five hours a day on social media apps, according to a Gallup poll.

“Everyone needs to know the risk associated with these social media platforms,” New York Attorney General Letitia James said in a statement. “The Surgeon General’s recommendation is a strong first step in that direction, and I hope warning labels will be implemented swiftly to raise more awareness about this issue.”

James has routinely clashed with social media companies, headlining [a lawsuit against Meta filed in October 2023](#). The suit alleged that Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, was causing irreparable harm to the mental health of young adults.

Appending a warning to social media apps requires Congressional approval.

In [an interview with CNN in June](#), Murthy said he thinks “it’s essential that parents know what we now know, which is that there are significant harms associated with social media use.”

Murthy has pushed for Congress to introduce a measure to slap warning labels on apps that feed what he called a mental health crisis that leaves parents mostly powerless.

Congress has so far ignored Murthy’s plea to introduce a bill requiring warning labels. But the Senate did pass the Kids Online Safety Act this summer — a proposal backed by Microsoft, X and Snap — that would require tech companies to protect children from dangerous online content and shoulder the burden when their platforms cause harm.

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