

# Protecting Children from Online Predators Act

## Background

A disturbing report by the New York Times revealed this week that YouTube algorithms are funneling videos of partly clothed kids to pedophiles. YouTube’s algorithm finds otherwise innocent videos—like a home video made and uploaded by a child—that has fleeting, accidental frames where the child is partly undressed. And then YouTube collects those videos into a repository and recommends those videos to people who have viewed sexually themed content or many videos of prepubescent children.

To make matters worse, some of these videos are linked to the kids’ social media accounts. Pedophiles who find these videos on YouTube’s recommendation then contact those children and try to “groom” them “into posting more sexualized pictures or engaging in sexual activity and having it videotaped.”

## What Senator Hawley’s bill does

The solution is simple: YouTube and other video-hosting websites should stop recommending videos that feature children. Yet astonishingly, YouTube refused to do so when asked even though its technology is advanced enough. To its credit, YouTube is trying to tweak its algorithm and promises that it will limit some recommendations, but it refuses to use the most effective means to stop this problem because it is worried about decreasing traffic across its site.

Video-hosting should prioritize the safety of children over money. Senator Hawley’s bill would force them to do so.

- **Bans recommending videos that feature children**
  - Prohibits video-hosting websites from recommending videos that feature minors
  - Those videos could still appear in search results
- **Exceptions**
  - The bill would apply only to videos that primarily feature minors, not videos that simply have minors in the background
  - Professionally produced videos, like prime-time talent-show competitions, would be exempt
- **Impose criminal penalties and stiff fines for violations**