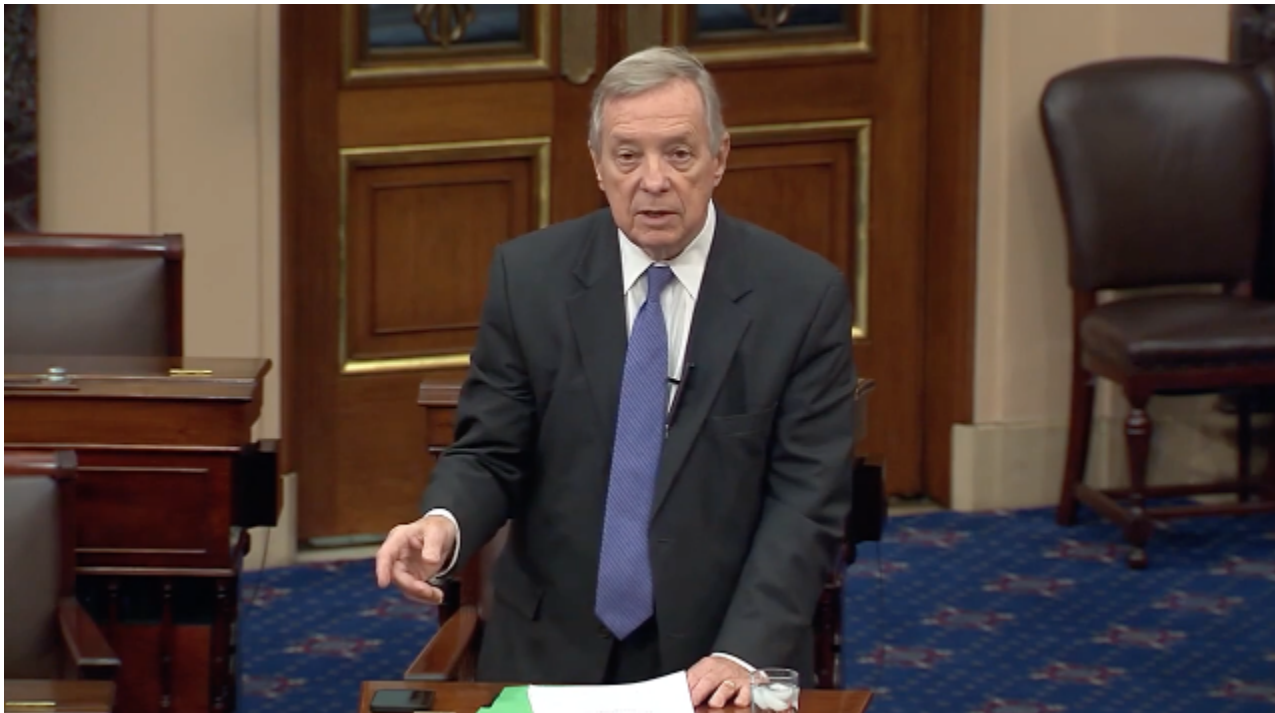


Durbin Delivers Floor Speech On Big Tech's Failures To Protect Kids From Sexual Exploitation Online

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WASHINGTON – Ahead of the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on the failures of Big Tech to protect kids from sexual exploitation online, U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, spoke on the Senate floor outlining what he hopes to hear from the CEOs of Discord, Meta, Snap, TikTok, and X (formerly known as Twitter). Durbin also called on his colleagues to support his [*Strengthening Transparency and Obligations to Protect Children Suffering from Abuse and Mistreatment Act of 2023*](#) (*STOP CSAM Act*), legislation that supports victims and increases accountability and transparency for online platforms. During his speech, Durbin also detailed the need for Congress to update its outdated laws in the face of an unprecedented wave of technological innovation.

“For the first time, the CEOs of five Big Tech companies will testify about the crisis of online child sexual exploitation. This continues our Committee’s bipartisan work to

combat the dangers children face online. This has been one of my top priorities as Chair of the Committee,” said Durbin. “I look forward to hearing from these companies about what they’re doing to make their platforms inaccessible to child sex offenders. As recently as last week, some have launched new child safety measures that are long overdue... But it should not take a hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee to finally get these companies to prioritize child safety. Because these changes are half measures at best, I welcome the opportunity to question them about what more needs to be done.”

Durbin and the Committee have extensively examined and investigated the plague of online child sexual exploitation, through hearings, legislation, and oversight efforts. Tomorrow’s hearing will build on that work and highlight the need for Congress to act on the bipartisan bills reported by the Committee. Last February, the Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing entitled, “[Protecting Our Children Online](#),” which included powerful testimony from those working to increase children’s privacy and safety online.

The National Center on Sexual Exploitation has named each of these five companies to their annual “Dirty Dozen” list for facilitating child sexual exploitation.

Durbin continued, “There have been recent, troubling reports on how each of these platforms is being used by offenders to target children or trade child sexual abuse material. Some reports even detail how the platforms promote exploitative behavior... I am sure every member of the Senate has heard from constituents, friends, and family members about the harms Big Tech is inflicting on our kids. Tomorrow, the Senate Judiciary Committee will demand answers.”

Since the earliest days of the internet age, companies have been allowed to act with near impunity. Durbin cited a troubling change by Meta, which carries grave consequences for children. Every year, Meta submits tens of millions of CyberTips to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), concerning child sexual abuse material (CSAM) found on its platforms. In December, Meta announced it is rolling out end-to-end encryption by default on its Facebook and Messenger platforms. Because of this change, Meta will no longer be able to use certain tools to detect and report child exploitation. NCMEC called Meta’s adoption of end-to-end encryption a, “devastating blow for child protection.” NCMEC and other advocates are imploring Meta to pause the rollout until it demonstrates that the encryption switch won’t cause children harm.

“Encryption can be a valuable tool for protecting privacy. But it is alarming for a company to kneecap their own work to stop online child sexual exploitation,” said Durbin. “This highlights the unacceptable situation we find ourselves in. There are no tools to hold the company accountable. Instead, survivors and advocates are left to plead with these companies to choose safety over profit.”

Durbin heard directly from the Phoenix 11, a group of CSAM survivors, who powerfully expressed their rage about this situation in a letter they recently sent Durbin. They stated, “As survivors, we bear the consequences when decisions are made that prioritize profit over children ... If Meta no longer reports these crimes against us, we alone suffer the consequences.”

Durbin concluded by imploring his colleagues to update the law—specifically Section 230 of the *Communications Decency Act*, which has protected the tech industry from accountability for the damage it has done.

Durbin continued, “That law was enacted to allow a nascent industry to grow. But now, it has become an entitlement for the most profitable industry in the history of capitalism to line their pockets at the expense of our kids.”

In 2013, NCMEC received approximately 1,380 CyberTips per day. By 2023, this skyrocketed to 100,000 CyberTips per day. There has also been a dramatic increase in the number of victims per offender, who can use technology to ensnare a shocking number of children without ever leaving their home. A single defendant prosecuted in Minnesota sextorted over 1,100 children.

“Everyone needs to do their part to stop this gross injustice—and that includes Congress finally enacting legislation that holds the tech industry accountable when it fails to protect children. That is why the Judiciary Committee will hold its landmark hearing tomorrow. And it is why I will continue working to bring the *STOP CSAM Act* and other critical bills that would protect our kids to the Senate floor,” Durbin concluded.

Video of Durbin’s remarks on the Senate floor is available [here](#).

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