

Danger, Will Robinson!

November 19, 2026

Come the New Year, in the once-great state of New York, users of social media will be subjected to a ten-second warning message when they open up their apps: "The Surgeon General has warned that while social media may have benefits for some young users, excessive use may be associated with significant mental health harms."

The "message would appear the first time a user 17 years old or younger opens the app each day and again for 30 seconds after three hours of use," writes Josh Plauzé. "Any social media platform that has an 'addictive feed, autoplay, and/or infinite scroll' would have to display it."

Like any good *Reason* writer, Plauzé focuses on a lawsuit brought against the requirement: "NetChoice argues that the law interferes with people's access to information and compels private actors to spout the state's opinion."

Some will quibble with that "interfering" — as a trivial half minute.

And the private actors required to "spout the state's opinion" are of the same kind who regularly do such things routinely, required by federal regulation to place nutritional information on foodstuffs, or those required by lawyers and insurance companies to print warnings on garment bags not to place them over your head.

It may very well be that social media is often harmful for the young, amplifying peer-pressure, facilitating pornography, delivering a barrage of propaganda — pressuring most to conformity and some even to suicide. Parents and schools should, arguably, prohibit smart phone use by the young.

But what should the state of New York do?

Mr. Plauzé concludes that "the state's finding that social media use 'may be associated' with harm doesn't justify infringing on people's right to free speech."

I merely note that anyone with access to a Virtual Private Network (VPN) would be able to skip this state-mandated bother altogether.

Leading me to suspect that state politicians will increasingly side with China and demand an end to VPNs entirely.

And that would be a *major* infringement on freedom.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

NOTE: A federal court already blocked Colorado's nearly identical law on First Amendment grounds in November 2025, and NetChoice has challenged California's version too — so the VPN workaround may end up moot.