

1 MICHAEL W. BIEN – 096891  
VAN SWEARINGEN – 259809  
2 ALEXANDER GOURSE – 321631  
AMY XU – 330707  
3 ROSEN BIEN  
GALVAN & GRUNFELD LLP  
4 101 Mission Street, Sixth Floor  
San Francisco, California 94105-1738  
5 Telephone: (415) 433-6830  
Facsimile: (415) 433-7104  
6 Email: mbien@rbgg.com  
vswearingen@rbgg.com  
7 agourse@rbgg.com  
axu@rbgg.com

8 KELIANG (CLAY) ZHU – 305509  
9 DEHENG LAW OFFICES PC  
7901 Stoneridge Drive #208  
10 Pleasanton, California 94588  
Telephone: (925) 399-5856  
11 Facsimile: (925) 397-1976  
Email: czhu@dehengsv.com

12 ANGUS F. NI – Admitted *Pro Hac Vice*  
13 AFN LAW PLLC  
502 Second Avenue, Suite 1400  
14 Seattle, Washington 98104  
Telephone: (773) 543-3223  
15 Email: angus@afnlegal.com

16 Attorneys for Plaintiffs

17 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

18 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA, SAN FRANCISCO DIVISION

19  
20 U.S. WECHAT USERS ALLIANCE,  
CHIHUO INC., BRENT COULTER,  
21 FANGYI DUAN, JINNENG BAO, ELAINE  
PENG, and XIAO ZHANG,

22 Plaintiffs,

23 v.

24 DONALD J. TRUMP, in his official capacity  
as President of the United States, and  
25 WILBUR ROSS, in his official capacity as  
Secretary of Commerce,

26 Defendants.  
27

THOMAS R. BURKE – 141930  
DAVIS WRIGHT TREMAINE LLP  
505 Montgomery Street, Suite 800  
San Francisco, California 94111-6533  
Telephone: (415) 276-6500  
Facsimile: (415) 276-6599  
Email: thomasburke@dwt.com

DAVID M. GOSSETT – Admitted *Pro Hac Vice*  
DAVIS WRIGHT TREMAINE LLP  
1301 K Street N.W., Suite 500 East  
Washington, D.C. 20005-3366  
Telephone: (202) 973-4216  
Facsimile: (202) 973-4499  
Email: davidgossett@dwt.com

Case No. 3:20-cv-05910-LB

**PLAINTIFFS’ RESPONSE TO  
DEFENDANTS’ NOTICE REGARDING  
IMPLEMENTATION OF EXECUTIVE  
ORDER 13943**

Judge: Hon. Laurel Beeler  
Date: September 17, 2020  
Time: 9:30 a.m.  
Crtrm.: Remote

Trial Date: None Set

1 On September 16, 2020, with only two full business days left before the civil and  
2 criminal prohibitions of President Trump’s Executive Order banning WeChat (the “EO”)  
3 become effective, on Sunday, September 20, Defendants remain unable or unwilling to  
4 state publicly what “any transaction that is related to WeChat” means or what conduct  
5 Defendants have deemed to be subject to criminal prosecution. Defendants’ “representa-  
6 tions and assurances” in their Notice Regarding Implementation (“Notice,” Dkt. 31) fall far  
7 short of what is needed to address the serious and substantial First and Fifth Amendment  
8 issues raised by the EO. Instead, Defendants’ filing demonstrates that a preliminary  
9 injunction is necessary and appropriate to preserve the status quo and prevent the  
10 irreparable loss of rights pending full adjudication on the merits.

11 Plaintiffs’ Complaint, filed on August 21, set forth numerous reasons that the  
12 WeChat Ban is constitutionally defective and must be enjoined. Without revealing the  
13 substance of any settlement communications, Plaintiffs want this Court to know that:

- 14 • Plaintiffs attempted to resolve the preliminary injunction by agreement  
15 beginning with a meet and confer letter dated August 24;
- 16 • A telephone call between the parties was held on August 25;
- 17 • More than two weeks later, Defendants sent their first written response on  
18 September 10;
- 19 • Plaintiffs responded to Defendants in writing within hours, raising important  
20 questions and concerns, and requesting a meeting; and
- 21 • Defendants declined to meet and, instead, waited six more days, until  
22 September 16, to respond at all, making only one minor change which is  
23 clearly insufficient.

24 Supplemental Declaration of Michael W. Bien in Support of Preliminary Injunction, *filed*  
25 *herewith*, ¶¶ 2-6.

26 Exhibit 1 to Defendants’ Notice (Dkt. 31-1) at 2:7-8 references this correspondence,  
27 implying that the questions and concerns raised by Plaintiffs have been adequately  
28 addressed. Defendants’ September 16 letter does not, in fact, resolve the fundamental

1 constitutional defects of the EO and underscores the critical importance of the preliminary  
2 injunction to protect the rights of Plaintiffs and other WeChat users in the United States.

3 **I. DEFENDANTS’ “REPRESENTATIONS AND ASSURANCES” ARE**  
4 **INADEQUATE TO CURE THE EO; THE PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION**  
5 **SHOULD BE GRANTED**

6 **A. The EO Will Still Become Effective on Sunday, September 20**

7 Defendants have not delayed the effective date of the EO’s prohibitions despite the  
8 fact that the Secretary “continues to review a range of transactions, including those that  
9 could directly or indirectly impact use of the WeChat app.”<sup>1</sup> Notice, Dkt. 31 at ECF 2:1-2.  
10 Defendants thus continue to refuse to address one of the many fundamental flaws in the  
11 EO: it violates the Fifth Amendment Due Process Clause due to its failure to provide  
12 notice, its vagueness, and its overbreadth. The EO may be enforced against Plaintiffs in  
13 just four days even though a reasonable person still cannot understand what the EO means  
14 or what conduct it will prohibit. Defendants’ September 16 letter confirms Plaintiffs’  
15 understanding of the EO—it will go into effect on September 20 unless this Court enjoins  
16 it. *See United States v. Stevens*, 559 U.S. 460, 480 (2010) (“...the First Amendment  
17 protects against the Government; it does not leave us at the mercy of *noblesse oblige*. We  
18 would not uphold an unconstitutional statute merely because the Government promised to  
19 use it responsibly...This prosecution is itself evidence of the danger in putting faith in  
20 government representations of prosecutorial restraint. When this legislation was enacted,  
21 the Executive Branch announced that it would interpret § 48 as covering only depictions  
22 ‘of wanton cruelty to animals designed to appeal to a prurient interest in sex.’ See  
23 Statement by President William J. Clinton upon Signing H. R. 1887, 34 Weekly Comp.  
24 Pres. Doc. 2557 (Dec. 9, 1999). No one suggests that the videos in this case fit that  
25 description. The Government’s assurance that it will apply §48 far more restrictively than  
26 its language provides is pertinent only as an implicit acknowledgment of the potential  
27 constitutional problems with a more natural reading.”).

28 <sup>1</sup> This is despite the fact the IEEPA explicitly prohibits the President from “directly or indirectly” curtailing “personal communications.” *See* Mot. (Dkt. 17) at 32-33.

[3615616.1]

1           **B.     The “Representations and Assurances” Provide No Clarity About What**  
2           **the Secretary Will or Won’t Do on September 20**

3           Defendants have still provided no information whatsoever about what specific  
4 “transactions” will be prohibited on September 20. Thus, the Secretary has not taken off  
5 the table his ability to ban the *use* of WeChat by anyone, including Plaintiffs and all other  
6 WeChat users in the United States. This could be done, for example, through a definition  
7 of transaction and an enforcement order directed at Tencent itself, or entities that contract  
8 with Tencent to provide products or services that allow WeChat to function in the United  
9 States, like Apple or Google, who make available the WeChat app in their online stores for  
10 use on their phones, and provide regular updates to the WeChat app through automatic  
11 downloads to app users.

12           The first sentence of the “representations and assurances” paragraph (Dkt. 31 at  
13 ECF 2:1) confuses rather than clarifies: “At present, activity involving the WeChat app is  
14 not prohibited.” But on Sunday, September 20, there apparently *will* be activity involving  
15 the WeChat app that is prohibited, the Secretary just has not decided what the activity may  
16 be and sees no reason to inform Plaintiffs, the public, or this Court in advance of the  
17 effective date.

18           The second sentence (*id.* at ECF 2:1-4) confirms that the Secretary reserves the  
19 right to define transactions and to initiate an enforcement action on September 20, “that  
20 could directly or indirectly impact the use of the WeChat app.” This expressly leaves open  
21 the possibility of actions that could ban or limit *all* of the constitutionally-protected uses of  
22 WeChat even if the “Secretary does not intend to take actions that would target persons or  
23 groups whose only connection with WeChat is their use or downloading of the app to  
24 convey personal or business information between users...or impose criminal or civil  
25 liability on such users.” This is confirmed by the last sentence (*id.* at ECF 2:4-6): “the use  
26 of the app for such communications could be directly or indirectly impaired through  
27 measures targeted at other transactions, use and downloading of the app for this limited  
28 purpose” will not be prohibited.

[3615616.1]

1           **C.     There Are Numerous Other Activities and Uses of WeChat That May**  
 2           **Still Be Prohibited and Subject to Criminal and Civil Sanctions That**  
 3           **Are Not Addressed by Defendants’ “Representations and Assurances”**

4           Defendants have provided a very narrow and limited statement that is anything but  
 5 a safe harbor that would provide reasonable notice to WeChat users of what conduct will  
 6 be prohibited by the EO on Sunday, September 20: “the Secretary does not intend to take  
 7 actions that would target persons or groups whose only connection with WeChat is their  
 8 use or downloading of the app to convey personal or business information between users.”  
 9 *Id.* at ECF 2:2-4. Plaintiffs’ evidence submitted in support of this motion illustrates uses  
 10 of the app that are not addressed by this carefully couched statement. For example,  
 11 WeChat has a payments function that is used to buy and sell goods and to transfer funds to  
 12 other users. *See, e.g.*, Sun Decl. (Dkt. 17-11) ¶¶ 10; Zhang Decl. (Dkt. 17-6) ¶ 10. That  
 13 may be prohibited. WeChat users also use the app to store and manage data and  
 14 information about their WeChat contacts, customers, employees and patients, and  
 15 generally to run their businesses. *See, e.g.*, Duan Decl. (Dkt. 17-4) ¶¶ 14, 16; Peng Decl.  
 16 (Dkt. 17-5) ¶¶ 10-11; Coulter Decl. (Dkt. 17-3) ¶¶ 11-12. That may be prohibited.  
 17 WeChat users also purchase services from WeChat or Tencent, such as subscriptions and  
 18 advertisements, and receive payments from or through WeChat/Tencent for products and  
 19 services that they sell through the app. *See, e.g.*, Sun Decl. (Dkt. 17-11) ¶¶ 19-23; Duan  
 20 Decl. (Dkt. 17-4) ¶¶ 18-20. These all may be prohibited.

21           In addition, anyone who does anything on WeChat other than “the use and  
 22 download of the app to convey personal or business information to another user” may lose  
 23 the benefit of even this narrow assurance because they no longer have that as their “only  
 24 connection with WeChat,” whatever that means. *See* Notice, Dkt. 31 at ECF 2:2-4.

24           **D.     Defendants’ New Position Further Undermines the “National Security”**  
 25           **Justification for the WeChat Ban**

26           Of course, Defendants’ newly articulated indifference to individual WeChat users  
 27 who “convey personal or business information” with other users, flies in the face of their  
 28 entire rationale for banning WeChat in the first place—the purported national security

1 implications of the public’s use of WeChat. Having first failed to articulate any actual  
2 national security concern, the administration’s latest “assurances” that users can keep using  
3 WeChat, and exchange their personal and business information, only further illustrates the  
4 hollowness and pre-textual nature of Defendants’ “national security” rationales.

5 **II. THE RECENT TIKTOK DECISION IS NOT RELEVANT**

6 Defendants Notice of Recent Decision (Dkt. 32) concerns a lawsuit brought by an  
7 individual employee of TikTok challenging the President’s August 6, 2020 executive order  
8 concerning TikTok. Most importantly, that employees’ lawsuit does not present a First  
9 Amendment claim. *See* Dkt. 32 at 3, n. 1. In the TikTok matter, the Government’s  
10 assurance cured the specific concern raised by the plaintiff employee—that he would be  
11 prosecuted for receiving a paycheck. *See* Dkt. 32 at 2. The above inadequacies make clear  
12 that the Government’s assurances here do not resolve Plaintiffs’ injuries. Finally, many of  
13 the Administrations’ concerns about TikTok have are presently being addressed through  
14 the proposed spin-off of TikTok by ByteDance (TikTok’s parent company) and proposed  
15 major investment/purchase in the new entity by U.S.-based Oracle.

16 **CONCLUSION**

17 For all of these reasons, Plaintiffs request that this Court enter a preliminary  
18 injunction enjoining the EO.

19  
20 DATED: September 16, 2020

Respectfully submitted,

21 ROSEN BIEN GALVAN & GRUNFELD LLP

22 By: */s/ Michael W. Bien*

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Michael W. Bien

24 Attorneys for Plaintiffs