FLIPPING THE SCRIPT ON STUDENT PHONE USE

The Commons

WHY NOW?

During school hours, phone use fuels cheating, cyberbullying, and constant distractions from social media and games.

- Students spend 1.5 hrs every school day on their phones for non-academic purposes despite phone bans - **that's 1 month of class time gone.**
- Teens who spend more than 3 hrs per day on social media face **double the risk of mental health problems.**
- Teachers cite student cellphone use as an *'Almost constant distraction... contributing to* **heavy stress and burnout.'**

This also matters for parents—whether they are concerned about their child missing out on learning or worried about mental health struggles.

Think of it like secondhand smoke: even if your child is self-regulating, the environment matters. What other students are doing/able to see with their phones affects every child's ability to focus, connect, and thrive.

Growing Bi-Partisan Legislation

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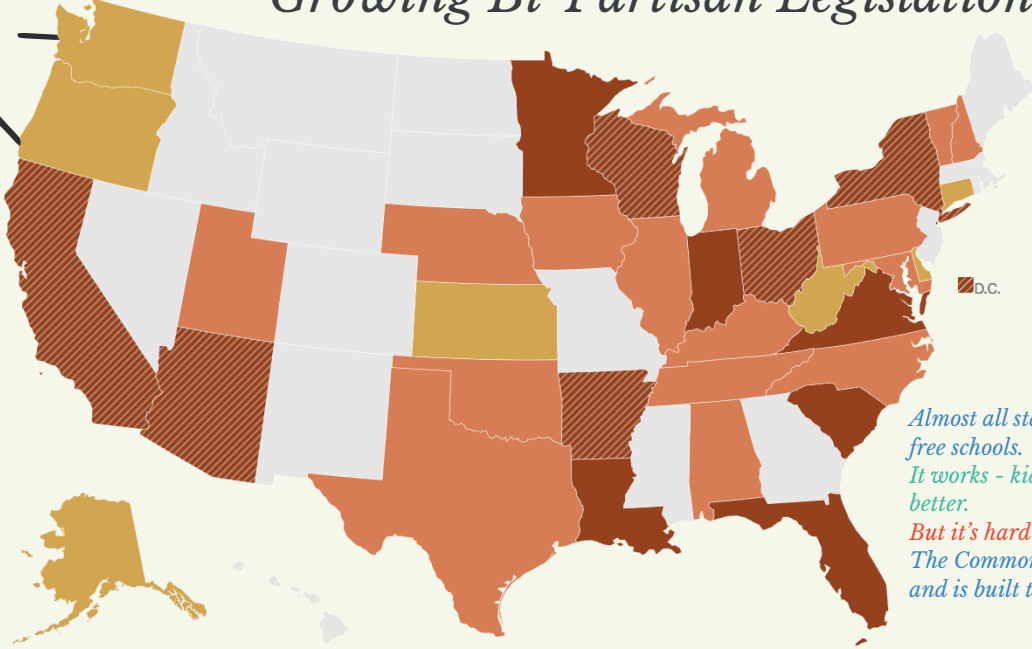
Almost all states now support phone-free schools.
It works - kids focus better and feel better.
But it's hard to enforce.
The Commons makes it easy, safe, and is built to last.

Data: Axios research and KFF; Map: Axios Visuals

■ Ban or restriction   ■ Legislation introduced   ■ Policy recommendation/pilot program   ☐ No ban   ▨ Ban passed but not enacted

It's Time to Go Beyond Bans & Build Student Agency

Reducing phone distractions doesn't have to mean bans, pouches, or burnout.

The Commons combines technology and a data-driven framework that blends positive behavioral reinforcement, digital citizenship curriculum, and staff training to promote student agency around their device use.

Solution	Student Autonomy	Accountability	Protects Learning Time	Behavior Change	Emergency Access	Staff Sustainability
No Policy or Informal Ban	✅ YES	❌ Varies by teacher	❌ High daily disruption	❌ NO	✅ YES	❌ Inconsistent enforcement; contributes to teacher burnout
Teacher Phone Collection	❌ NO	⚠️ Risk & liability if devices are lost, stolen or damaged	❌ 5–20 mins lost per class collecting and distributing	❌ NO	⚠️ Slower response	❌ Burdens teachers
Pouches (e.g., Yondr)	❌ NO	⚠️ Easily bypassed	⚠️ Admin interruptions	❌ NO education or Staff PD	❌ NO access	❌ Labor-intensive
The Commons App	✅ YES	✅ System-level accountability	✅ Minimal classroom impact	✅ Curriculum + Staff PD	✅ Calls & texts work	✅ Real-time data supports staff