"Deepfake" Videos Under Spotlight of New Texas Law

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TEXAS -- In the digital age, perhaps you have clicked on computer-generated videos of people that look and sound real but are not.

- **Computer-generated videos made to look real**

- **Now illegal for political use in the state of Texas**

The videos known as "deepfake" are not found buried in the blackest of depths on the dark web. The videos of intentional deception can be found floating freely on the surface of the everyday internet, where an estimated 3.7 billion individuals have instant access to consume whatever message is streaming out of the void into the human conscious.

Texas legislators are fully aware of the computer-generated videos designed to persuade the average person to lean closer to a message that may not be true.

"They see a video and it looks real, it sounds real, the lips move," said Stephen Barish, chief operating officer of CNF Technology. "And they assume that's exactly what that individual said. And then they get manipulated."

Earlier this year, an online viral clip showed U.S. House Speaker Nancy Polosi stuttering incoherently at a podium. Fox News was fooled and presented it as real. Before the clip was found to be deep faked, President Trump retweeted the clip, writing "PELOSI STAMMERS THROUGH NEWS CONFERENCE."

"These types of videos are particularly threatening because people tend to believe what they see more than what they hear and more than what they read," said Barish.

Barish is a private industry cyber security expert who pays attention to deepfake videos, and the damage these videos produce. His military background gave him early access to witness how the public can be duped.

"Many of us grew up in this type of environment where we saw this type of media technology to try and affect population opinion," said Barish

A new Texas law is now in effect which makes creation of computer-generated videos illegal if used to impact a political candidate or election. SB 751, signed by Gov. Greg Abbott earlier this year, is the first in the nation. Barish says the law could be tough to enforce, and might be challenged in the court system. He does praise Texas for its efforts.

"In terms of trying to I think it's an important first step to at least open the door on the dialogue of how is technology affecting the way we elect our political leaders," Barish said.

In the meantime, tens of thousands of videos are out there for the world to watch, as experts and the government will try to figure out what's real or not.

The full article can viewed at: https://spectrumlocalnews.com/tx/san-antonio/news/2019/10/11/-deepfake--videos-under-spotlight-of-new-texas-law?cid=share_email

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