

US attorneys meet with Craigslist on ad concerns

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A man walks past the office of online site Craigslist in San Francisco, California, in 2006. US attorneys general met with Craigslist on Tuesday to discuss concerns that the free online classified service is being used to advertise prostitution.

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"We are optimistic that our shared concerns can be addressed while preserving the beneficial aspects of Craigslist...without compromising the quintessentially American values of free speech embodied in our Constitution," the website's chief executive Jim Buckmaster told AFP after the meeting.

Buckmaster added that Craigslist is "enjoyed by tens of millions of law-

abiding Americans each month."

Missouri attorney general Chris Koster said prior to the meeting that he intended to begin negotiating with Craigslist representatives to eliminate "Erotic Services" ads that amount to little more than offers of sex for sale.

Koster's office did not return AFP requests for comment on Tuesday.

Koster joined attorneys general from Connecticut and Illinois at the meeting with Craigslist in New York City, according to Buckmaster.

"Craigslist is allowing advertisements for illegal activities like prostitution on its site," Koster said in a written release prior to the meeting. "It is blatant. It is irresponsible. It is illegal."

California-based Craigslist has defended itself repeatedly against similar accusations.

In March, Buckmaster argued they were having "spectacular" results in clamping down on sex ads on the Internet bulletin board.

Buckmaster said the crackdown on sex ads stemmed from a collaborative effort launched in November with 40 US attorneys general and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

US law protects Craigslist and other websites from being responsible for content posted by users, the website's lawyers argue.

"Craigslist is responsible for the types of advertisements it allows, and it is imperative that Craigslist agree to tougher restrictions and to remove ads for illegal activities from its site," Koster said.

Koster decried such online arrangements as "dangerous" in an apparent veiled reference to the recent arrest of a young medical student charged with murdering a woman who had posted an ad on Craigslist.

Philip Markoff, 22, was charged with the murder of Julissa Brisman, 26, who offered massage services on Craigslist and was found shot dead on April 14 in her hotel room at the Boston Marriott.

The case stirred a media frenzy in Boston amid the hunt for a so-called "Craigslist Killer" named after the website which advertises everything from houses to babysitters to furniture for sale.

Markoff is also a suspect in the case of a 29-year-old woman who advertised on [Craigslist](#) as an exotic dancer. She was robbed of her credit card and 800 dollars cash on April 10 from a room at a different hotel.

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