

Porn sites closer to getting '.xxx' Web address

December 10 2010, By JOELLE TESSLER , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- Porn sites are closer to getting their own address on the Internet.

The online red-light district would be in the form of an ".xxx" domain name suffix alongside longstanding ones such as ".com" and ".org."

Following a decade-long battle, the [Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers](#), or ICANN, voted Friday to proceed with a contract with ICM Registry LLC to sell [domain names](#) ending in ".xxx." ICANN voted in June to start negotiating the contract.

The new suffix still has other hurdles to clear, however. At a meeting in Cartagena, Colombia, ICANN decided to first consult with an advisory committee comprised of government officials worldwide. Some committee members have raised concerns about a suffix dedicated solely to sites with adult content. It's not clear whether and how their objections would affect the suffix.

Stuart Lawley, ICM's chief executive, said the new suffix would benefit adult entertainment sites by making it easier for customers to find them. Customers, too, would benefit, he said, because sites with an ".xxx" address would commit to protect consumers from identity theft and [credit card fraud](#) and not to traffic in child abuse images.

Use of ".xxx" would be voluntary, though, and skeptics argue that few adult-only sites would give up their existing ".com" addresses.

And conservative religious groups worry that an ".xxx" suffix would legitimize Internet porn.

ICM Registry, which is based in Palm Beach, Fla., applied to set up an ".xxx" suffix in 2000 and again in 2004. Although ICANN gave it preliminary approval in 2005, it later rejected the proposal. ICM Registry appealed, and an independent review found that ICANN did not have a valid reason for changing its mind - paving the way for Friday's vote.

The porn industry isn't completely behind ".xxx," because some see the site as creating a ghetto for adult content and setting rules where they don't want any. But Lawley said ICM already has 189,000 "pre-registrations" for ".xxx" sites and expects to register roughly 500,000 new sites when it launches the registry in the second quarter of 2011.

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