

Domain '.xxx' approved for Web porn sites

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(AP) -- You've heard of ".com" and ".org." Joining them soon will be their bawdy cousin: ".xxx."

On Friday, the board of directors of the [Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers](#), which oversees the Internet's naming system, approved the creation of a red-light district online for pornographic websites. It follows a decade-long battle over such a name.

The uproar over the idea has brought together unlikely bedfellows.

Religious groups argue that giving adult websites their own corner of the Internet legitimizes the content.

Pornographers worry it will ghettoize their sites. Although it's meant to be voluntary, they fear governments could try to mandate the domain's use, so that pornographic content is more easily blocked.

Diane Duke, executive director of the adult entertainment industry's Free Speech Coalition, said in a statement that ICANN has "disregarded overwhelming outpouring of opposition from the adult entertainment industry - the supposed sponsorship community" and dismissed the "interests of free speech on the Internet."

Supporters have maintained that approving the domain is in keeping with the principle of openness that has fueled the Internet's growth.

While the idea of ".xxx" has provoked a philosophical debate, for the

U.S. company that submitted the application for the domain, the issue is little more than a matter of dollars and cents.

ICM Registry and its CEO, Stuart Lawley, who has led the fight for ICANN's approval of ".xxx," stand to profit handsomely from the rollout of ".xxx" websites - because he will be in charge of collecting fees for the use of the new domains.

Lawley plans to charge registrars \$60 per year for the [domain names](#). He estimates that he could sell as many as 500,000 by the time he rolls them out this summer.

"This was always going to be a very lucrative arrangement," he said in an interview Friday.

Lawley's prices have been a critical issue for opponents to his plan, since domain names typically sell for a fraction of what Lawley plans to charge. They often sell for \$10 or less.

ICANN had repeatedly rejected Lawley's application since 2000, under pressure from Christian groups and governments unhappy with the spread of online porn. Lawley has pitched the suffix as a way for parents to more easily block access to the content. He argues it will be easier for Web filtering software to block ".xxx" sites since they are clearly labeled as porn.

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