

Craigslist removes adult services section

September 4 2010, By CHRISTOPHER LEONARD , AP Business Writer



This screen shot made on Saturday, Sept. 4, 2010 shows the opening page of Craigslist's website for Hartford, Conn., featuring a "censored" logo over what used to be the adult services section. Craigslist apparently closed the section two weeks after 17 state attorneys general demanded it be shut down. Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, one of the AGs who pressed for the change, said in a written statement that he welcomed the change and was trying to verify Craigslist's official policy going forward. (AP Photo/Craigslist) NO SALES

(AP) -- Craigslist appears to have surrendered in a legal fight over erotic ads posted on its website, shutting down its adult services section Saturday and replacing it with a black bar that simply says "censored."

The move comes just over a week after a group of state attorneys general said there weren't enough protections against blocking potentially illegal

ads promoting prostitution. It's not clear if the closure is permanent, and it appears to only effect ads in the United States.

The listings came under new scrutiny after the jailhouse suicide last month of a former medical student who was awaiting trial in the killing of a masseuse he met through Craigslist. Critics have likened the services to virtual pimping, while Craigslist maintained the site was carrying ads even tamer than those published by some newspapers.

Like many other free online forums, Craigslist typically does not review ads before they are posted by users. But in 2008, under pressure from 40 state attorneys general, Craigslist began requiring posters to provide a working phone number and pay a fee for placing an ad in what is now the adult services section. Several months later, Craigslist adopted a manual screening process in which postings are reviewed before publishing.

State officials believe Craigslist is still not doing enough to stop illegal ads from appearing.

The company said Saturday it would issue a statement on the matter, though it didn't say when.

Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, one of the 17 attorneys general who pressed for the change, said in a statement that he welcomed the change and was trying to verify Craigslist's official policy going forward.

In an Aug. 24 letter, the state attorneys general said Craigslist should remove the section because it couldn't adequately block potentially illegal ads promoting prostitution and child trafficking.

Authorities point to the case of 24-year-old Philip Markoff as a prime

example of the dangers posed by [Craigslist](#) services. The former medical student was accused of killing a masseuse he met through the hugely popular classified advertising site, which was founded by Craig Newmark. Markoff committed suicide in the Boston jail where he was awaiting trial.

Craigslist's adult services section carried ads for everything from personal massages to a night's companionship, which critics say veered into prostitution.

Craigslist's CEO Jim Buckmaster said in a May blog posting that the company's ads were no worse than those published by the alternative newspaper chain Village Voice Media. He cited one explicit ad which included the phrase: "anything goes \$90."

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