



## ATTORNEY GENERAL GEORGE JEPSEN

### ATTORNEYS GENERAL ASK BACKPAGE.COM TO SHOW EFFORTS TO BLOCK HUMAN TRAFFICKING

*For Immediate Release*

WEDNESDAY AUG. 31, 2011

HARTFORD – Attorney General George Jepsen and attorneys general in 45 other states and the territory of Guam, today requested information from Backpage.com to substantiate its claims regarding its efforts to remove advertising for prostitution, especially ads that could involve minors.

The attorneys general raised questions about Backpage.com’s claims that it has strict policies to block ads for illegal activity. The questions were raised in a letter to the company’s attorneys after inspections by Washington State, Missouri and Connecticut found hundreds of suspect ads on Backpage.com’s regional sites, and following numerous reports of prostitution-related arrests, some involving minors, which were linked to Backpage.com ads.

The attorneys general said Backpage.com has become a magnet for those seeking to exploit minors and noted more than 50 cases in 22 states over three years, involving the trafficking or attempted trafficking of minors through the online site. “These are only the stories that made it into the news; many more instances likely exist,” the attorneys general wrote.

In Connecticut, 49 children were identified as victims of domestic sex trafficking in 2009-10, the first year the state Department of Children and Families began reporting this statistic. In the same year, non-governmental organizations identified 109 victims of trafficking in Connecticut.

The Polaris Project, which established a national trafficking hotline, has received 184 calls from Connecticut since December, 2007, including 30 tip and crisis calls from those identifying themselves as victims of trafficking, or calling on behalf of a potential victim, in need of immediate assistance. This total includes all calls involving minors. The hotline received 11,874 calls nationwide in 2010.

“We must protect our most vulnerable, our children, from being forced into a world where they are treated as nothing more than commodities,” Attorney General Jepsen said. “Despite Backpage.com’s efforts, the volume of ads has not changed and children are being trafficked on the website. This has to stop, and I would hope that Backpage.com feels the same way.”

Citing Backpage.com’s claims about its efforts to curb ads for illegal activity, the attorneys general requested information about how many advertisements were submitted since Sept. 1, 2010 to Backpage.com’s adult section and subsections; how many of those advertisements were screened; how many were rejected and how many were removed after being discovered to be for illegal services.

Connecticut was among the 21 states in September, 2009 that requested Backpage.com close its adult services section, In 2008, 42 attorneys general reached an agreement with Craigslist, which removed its “erotic services” section altogether in May 2009.

Assistant Attorney General Brendan Flynn is handling this matter for the Attorney General with Department Head Philip Rosario of the Consumer Protection Unit.

View the entire letter to [Backpage](#) – (PDF-474KB)

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