

**CAPITOL REPORT**  
**Senator Luann Ridgeway**  
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Explicit Billboards

Anyone who travels along interstates and divided highways in Missouri cannot help but notice the outcropping of adult entertainment facilities along those corridors. They weren't there 10 years ago, or, if they were, they were hardly noticeable. It may be a sad commentary on the moral and spiritual health of our state that these businesses appear to be flocking to Missouri.

Nonetheless, the First Amendment protects the ability to operate adult entertainment facilities. They can be regulated with reasonable time place and manor restrictions.

One such restrictive was recently passed by the Missouri Legislature. Due to a 2004 law, the sexually explicit billboards dotting our highways now have 3 years to change the billboards. The signs will be limited to two signs—one indicating that only adults are allowed and another stating the business' name and operating hours.

The adult entertainment business owners brought a lawsuit (is there anything we don't sue over these days?), but a federal judge came to the rescue. He affirmed the right of the elected representatives of the people to decide what is appropriate content for these ads.

This law was passed because these ads trash up Missouri. Missouri's top two industries are agriculture and tourism. People come to Missouri in part for our family-oriented tourism, such as that in Branson. We don't need to ambush visitors to our state with eye-popping sexually explicit billboards.

Most importantly, this judge realized the determination of appropriate community standards was best left to the elected representatives of the people and not the opinion of appointed judges.

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