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Stopping Smut in Its Tracks

JEFFERSON CITY — It isn't getting any easier to raise a family these days. Our kids are repeatedly subjected to influences and pressures that my generation didn't face, at least not to the same degree. One of the most detrimental influences on kids (not to mention the rest of society) is the pornography industry.

I'm sure you've noticed, as I have, the growth of this seedy industry across the State of Missouri as smut shops in little metal buildings with gaudy signs continue to sprout up along our major highways, in our city centers and around otherwise quiet communities. Hiding behind the banner of "free speech" these purveyors of porn who care only for padding their pockets continue their encroachment with no regard for trail of harmful effects and exploitation they bring. It is no secret that these smut shops are a blight to local communities.

One of my top priorities in the legislature is cleaning up our state's image and for making it more family-friendly. I have sponsored legislation in the past to restrict how sexually-oriented businesses could operate with hopes reining in the influences these smut shops have on our communities.

This session I have filed [Senate Bill 737](#) which seeks to regulate sexually-oriented businesses in Missouri. This bill requires that smut shops close at 10:00 p.m. and restricts activities within these cabarets. Missouri might be the land of the pioneers, but we need not be the "wild west" in terms of what sorts of so-called "entertainment" is legal within our borders.

Our communities did not ask for a fight with the pornography industry. It is the pornography industry that continues its aggressive expansion with no regard for the erosion of societal values it inevitably brings. In response to this assault we will respond with effective and meaningful regulation of this industry that refuses to police itself. The courts have repeatedly stated that laws can be passed that do not offend the First Amendment, and it is time for the Missouri legislature to do just that.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by e-mail at matt_bartle@senate.mo.gov or by phone at (888) 711-9278. My web address is <http://www.senate.mo.gov/bartle>.