



Senator Matt Bartle – Serving Jackson County

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Crime Bill Cracks Down on Craigslist

You may have heard in the news recently about some issues with the classified-ads website, Craigslist. Many of these issues came to light in the wake of several high-profile crimes involving the site, including the recent conviction of a Kansas man who raped three women who advertised in the “erotic services” section of Craigslist, which was nothing more than a gateway to prostitution and other illicit activities. After law enforcement officials in various states, including Missouri’s attorney general, pressured the company to clean up its ad space, Craigslist agreed to make several changes to the section. The site promised to keep closer tabs by having their employees manually review the section and by requiring those who post ads to leave telephone and credit card verification.

While Craigslist’s agreement with law enforcement officials is a step in the right direction, it does not go far enough. Missouri lawmakers wanted to ensure that if the site—or any similar site—or an individual promotes illegal sexual activities, they will be punished under the law. To make this happen, we included a provision in HB 62 (this year’s main crime bill) that creates the crime of promoting online sexual solicitation if a person or entity knowingly allows a web-based classified service to be used by individuals to post advertisements promoting prostitution, enticing a child to engage in sexual conduct, or promoting sexual trafficking of a child. Anyone promoting online sexual solicitation will be guilty of a felony, punishable by a \$5,000 fine for each day of the violation.

I also added language to the crime bill that requires entire interrogations of individuals suspected of committing serious crimes to be recorded. Until now, the decision to record interrogations has been at the discretion of individual law enforcement agencies.

When a dangerous felony is committed, it is reasonable for the jurors or judge in a case to want to see all of the evidence available. By recording the interrogations, jurors have a better view of all the evidence.

By their nature, interrogations must often be intense. However, on some occasions an innocent person has confessed under the stress of the moment. This leads to a miscarriage of justice on two fronts. An innocent person may be convicted and the true perpetrator may escape prosecution and go on to commit other serious crimes. Recording interrogations will help remedy these problems.

This measure had the backing of notable law enforcement and prosecutor associations. If signed by the governor, it will improve the effectiveness of our judicial system and ensure that those who commit dangerous crimes receive their due punishment.

If you have any 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>.

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