

SECOND REGULAR SESSION

# SENATE BILL NO. 901

## 103RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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INTRODUCED BY SENATOR HENDERSON.

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KRISTINA MARTIN, Secretary

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### AN ACT

To amend chapter 407, RSMo, by adding thereto one new section relating to age verification on adult websites, with penalty provisions.

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*Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Missouri, as follows:*

Section A. Chapter 407, RSMo, is amended by adding thereto one new section, to be known as section 407.3405, to read as follows:

**407.3405. 1. As used in this section, the following**

2 **terms mean:**

3 **(1) "Age verification", a method by which a commercial**  
4 **entity verifies the age of an individual by requiring the**  
5 **individual to:**

6 **(a) Provide digital identification; or**

7 **(b) Comply with a commercial age verification system**  
8 **that verifies age using:**

9 **a. Government-issued identification; or**

10 **b. A commercially reasonable method that relies on**  
11 **public or private transactional data to verify the age of an**  
12 **individual;**

13 **(2) "Commercial entity", a corporation, limited**  
14 **liability company, partnership, limited partnership, sole**  
15 **proprietorship, or other legally recognized business entity;**

(3) "Digital identification", information stored on a digital network that may be accessed by a commercial entity and that serves as proof of the identity of an individual;

(4) "Distribute", to issue, sell, give, provide, deliver, transfer, transmute, circulate, or disseminate by any means;

(5) "Minor", an individual younger than eighteen years of age;

(6) "News-gathering organization":

(a) An employee of a newspaper, news publication, or news source, printed or on an online or mobile platform, of current news and public interest, who is acting within the course and scope of that employment and can provide documentation of that employment with the newspaper, news publication, or news source; and

(b) An employee of a radio broadcast station, television broadcast station, cable television operator, or wire service who is acting within the course and scope of that employment and can provide documentation of that employment;

(7) "Publish", to communicate or make information available to another person or entity on a publicly available internet website;

(8) "Sexual material harmful to minors", any material that:

(a) The average person applying contemporary community standards would find, taking the material as a whole and with respect to minors, is designed to appeal to or pander to the prurient interest; or

(b) In a manner patently offensive with respect to minors, exploits, is devoted to, or principally consists of

47 descriptions of actual, simulated, or animated displays or  
48 depictions of:

49 a. A person's pubic hair, anus, or genitals or the  
50 nipple of the female breast;

51 b. Touching, caressing, or fondling of nipples,  
52 breasts, buttocks, anuses, or genitals; or

53 c. Sexual intercourse, masturbation, sodomy,  
54 bestiality, oral copulation, flagellation, excretory  
55 functions, exhibitions, or any other sexual act; and

56 (c) Taken as a whole, lacks serious literary,  
57 artistic, political, or scientific value for minors;

58 (9) "Transactional data", a sequence of information  
59 that documents an exchange, agreement, or transfer between  
60 an individual, commercial entity, or third party used for  
61 the purpose of satisfying a request or event. "Transactional  
62 data" includes records from mortgage, education, and  
63 employment entities.

64 2. A commercial entity that knowingly and  
65 intentionally publishes or distributes material on an  
66 internet website, including a social media platform, more  
67 than one-third of which is sexual material harmful to  
68 minors, shall use reasonable age verification methods to  
69 verify that an individual attempting to access the material  
70 is eighteen years of age or older.

71 3. A commercial entity that performs the age  
72 verification or a third party that performs the age  
73 verification under this section shall not retain any  
74 identifying information of the individual.

75 4. A commercial entity required to use reasonable age  
76 verification methods under this section shall:

77 (1) Display the following notices on its website and  
78 all advertisements for the website on which sexual material

79 harmful to minors is published or distributed in a fourteen-  
80 point font or larger:

81 "(a) Pornography is potentially biologically  
82 addictive, is proven to harm human brain  
83 development, desensitizes brain reward circuits,  
84 increases conditioned responses, and weakens brain  
85 function;

86 (b) Exposure to this content is associated with  
87 low self-esteem and body image, eating disorders,  
88 impaired brain development, and other emotional and  
89 mental illnesses; and

90 (c) Pornography increases the demand for  
91 prostitution, child exploitation, and child  
92 pornography."; and

93 (2) Display the following notice at the bottom of  
94 every page on the commercial entity's website in a fourteen-  
95 point font or larger:

96 "U.S. SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES  
97 ADMINISTRATION THIS HELPLINE IS A FREE,  
98 CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION SERVICE (IN ENGLISH OR  
99 SPANISH) OPEN 24 HOURS PER DAY, FOR INDIVIDUALS AND  
100 FAMILY MEMBERS FACING MENTAL HEALTH OR SUBSTANCE  
101 USE DISORDERS. THE SERVICE PROVIDES REFERRAL TO  
102 LOCAL TREATMENT FACILITIES, SUPPORT GROUPS, AND  
103 COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS."

104 5. This section shall not apply to a bona fide news or  
105 public interest broadcast, website video, report, or event  
106 and shall not be construed to affect the rights of a news-  
107 gathering organization.

108 6. An internet service provider, or its affiliates or  
109 subsidiaries, a search engine, or a cloud service provider

110 shall not be held to have violated provisions of this  
111 section solely for providing access or connection to or from  
112 a website or other information or content on the internet or  
113 on a facility, system, or network not under that provider's  
114 control, including transmission, downloading, intermediate  
115 storage, access software, or other services to the extent  
116 the provider or search engine is not responsible for the  
117 creation of the content that constitutes sexual material  
118 harmful to minors.

119       7. The attorney general shall enforce provisions of  
120 this section. If the attorney general believes that a  
121 commercial entity is knowingly violating or has knowingly  
122 violated provisions of this section and the action is in the  
123 public interest, the attorney general may bring an action in  
124 a court of competent jurisdiction. If the court finds that  
125 a violation occurred, the court may grant damages,  
126 injunctive relief, civil penalties, court costs and  
127 reasonable attorney fees, and any such other relief the  
128 court finds appropriate. Civil penalties shall be as  
129 follows:

130       (1) Ten thousand dollars per day that a commercial  
131 entity operates a website in violation of the age  
132 verification requirements under this section;

133       (2) Ten thousand dollars per instance when a  
134 commercial entity retains identifying information in  
135 violation of this section; and

136       (3) An additional amount of not more than two hundred  
137 fifty thousand dollars if one or more minors accessed sexual  
138 material harmful to minors in violation of the age  
139 verification requirements under this section.

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