

State of Connecticut

RICHARD BLUMENHAL
ATTORNEY GENERAL



Hartford

March 27, 2008

Via facsimile 202-654-9141

Barry Reingold, Esq.
Perkins, Cole
607 Fourteenth St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 2005

Re: Craigslist

Dear Mr. Reingold:

Although I recognize many of the beneficial services the Craigslist site provides to countless Connecticut consumers, my office has expressed our concerns for many months to Craigslist, through you as its attorney, that prostitutes appear to use the site's "erotic services" to advertise for clients. These postings typically include explicit photographs -- bordering on pornographic, hourly rates, and detailed descriptions of services clearly sexual in nature.

As one glaring recent example of the resulting problems, on March 19, 2008, a Connecticut woman was arrested after advertising for sexual services on Craigslist.

I am astonished and appalled by Craigslist's refusal to recognize the reality of prostitution on its website -- despite advertisements containing graphic photographs and hourly rates, and widespread public reports of prostitutes using the site.

I am especially troubled that Craigslist has disregarded and dismissed this serious and growing problem -- in effect turning a blind eye, refusing to hire or dedicate *anyone* to review postings that contain graphic nudity and solicitations with hourly rates, even in the "erotic services" portion of the website. Your company effectively denies the undeniable, incomprehensibly and unacceptably. Although Craigslist touts measures to ban illegal activities and limit or remove inappropriate postings in its erotic services section,¹ a cursory review of this section shows that its supposed solutions are woefully and obviously inadequate.

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1. We ban all illegal activity in our [Terms of Use](#)
2. We place prominent notices on our posting forms warning against illegal activity
3. We perform telephone verification on user accounts as a requirement for posting in "erotic services"
4. We block ads containing language that in our experience has a high likelihood of violating our Terms of Use

As a small step in response to my concerns, Craigslist now requires anyone posting a listing in the erotic services section to provide a phone number. This step, however, will hardly deter the prostitution problem on the site, and may indeed make it worse. Many of the most graphic solicitations already include a telephone number to enable prospective patrons of their services to contact them.

In short, Craigslist's measures have been completely inadequate to stem the tide of inappropriate and even illegal postings we have brought to your attention.

Craigslist must determine now what type of site it is. If it is truly concerned about this issue, it must devote resources and technology to eliminate these postings from its site.

Please notify me within 10 days with additional information or action you plan to take.

Very truly yours,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL

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- 5 We remove inappropriate ads that come to our attention
 - 6 We block persons violating our Terms of Use from posting
 - 7 We provide a community moderation system whereby our users flag inappropriate ads for removal
 - 8 We place prominent notices asking users to flag inappropriate ads
 - 9 We label adult content using the PICS rating system, which supports most content control software programs
 - 10 We prohibit the use of all adult-oriented categories by persons under the age of 18
 - 11 We participate in the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) Cybertipline program
 - 12 We place notices encouraging users to report any suspected abuse of minors
 - 13 We maintain a resource page to assist users in reporting suspected abuse of minors
 - 14 We maintain information pages regarding personal safety on craigslist
 - 15 We respond promptly to inquiries and requests for assistance from law enforcement officers
 - 16 We give periodic briefings for law enforcement officers on how to efficiently obtain information from craigslist