

ADVERTISEMENT FOR BACKPAGE WEBSITE IS UNDER SCRUTINY



Women with account on Backpage.com may be reconsidering their accounts and planning to close them. Approximately four women were found, all deceased, in the trunk of two cars this past Sunday. All of these women had one thing in common; they each had an account on Backpage.com, a website in which women can offer escort services to the general public. There is now a debate taking place on whether or not certain social media websites and outlets are advertising for websites that actually promote criminal activity to take place, according to the Christian Science Monitor. The Detroit police officials have said they are now pursuing warrants for both phone and Internet records of each of these women that were found dead. The police officials said that each of these women had their own profile on Backpage.com, which has been a controversial website for quite some time now. The website is owned by Village Voice Media. The attorney for Village Voice Media, Steve Suskin, made a statement that confirmed police are, in fact, investigating advertisements that are made on the website. Village Voice Media says that they are cooperating with police and their ongoing investigation. The website, Backpage.com, has been scrutinized several times before because of its connection with illegal activities which includes sex trafficking and basically, prostitution. In the month of August, Village Voice Media received a letter from 46 state attorneys in the United States. The letter requested that the website remove all advertisements that advertised adult and sexual services. While the website claims to have cooperated, it seems as though their work has been ineffective as there are still many adult-related advertisements being posted on the website that have not been removed. In fact, within just three years, there have been over 50 different instances that have taken place in which charges were filed because of sex trafficking with minors on this website. In the meantime, Village Voice Media has insisted that they have cooperated with police officials and law enforcement and have been working to prevent any sex trafficking from taking place on the website. An attorney in the Chicago area, Joe Obenberger, has said, "If people were liable for all the bad things the Internet was used for, criminally or civilly, it would be foolhardy for people to invest [in it], and the Internet would not grow." He believes that the website has not done anything wrong and that this website is the same as phone services that are often used. He also believes that it is a violation of free speech to request Village Voice Media to make necessary changes. Malika Saada Saar, a member of the Rebecca Project for Human Rights, says, "If I tried to sell crack online through Backpage, the Village Voice would not stand up and say this is about the First Amendment."

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