

Statement from Liz McDougall, General Counsel to Village Voice Media Holdings:

"Human trafficking online, particularly child sex trafficking, is an abomination and must be stopped. But to stop human trafficking online, you have to fight it online. And that is exactly what Backpage.com is doing -- to an unprecedented degree.

Backpage.com aggressively monitors potential trafficking cases and promptly cooperates with frontline law enforcement to rescue victims and investigate, arrest and convict traffickers. We employ a triple-tiered policing system -- an automated filtering to preclude ads with suspect words, phrases, and data, followed by two levels of manual review of all content submitted by users for the adult and personal categories.

Backpage.com responds to subpoena requests within 24 hours or less in almost all cases, and uses its own technological tools and data to conduct further Internet research and voluntarily provides this additional evidence to law enforcement. In fact, one of the reasons Backpage so often crops up in news media accounts of busts is that we collaborate so closely with law enforcement.

Backpage.com also immediately reports content that could involve exploitation of a minor to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). Backpage.com established a special expedited reporting system to NCMEC for cases where there appears to be a possibility of rescue.

Closing cooperative U.S. web services such as Backpage.com is counter-productive because it drives traffickers back into the shadows where they have historically evaded law enforcement. Traffickers can simply and easily shift their business to websites operating in the Internet underground or move their operations offshore, where traffickers continue to advertise and sell children for sex in the U.S. -- but the digital and financial clues to identify and arrest them and the bright forensic footprint of their activity is pushed beyond the reach of American subpoenas, and the traffickers and their victims are invisible again. This is no solution.

Backpage is working diligently to rid its site of human trafficking. Although Backpage is a for-profit business, it does not want to make a single penny off of this abhorrent activity. In fact, it is investing substantial money, time and personnel in monitoring the site, cooperating with law enforcement, and collaborating with anti-trafficking and child protection groups to find effective, workable solutions."

