

Utah's Anti-Porn Crusade Marches On With Tech Filtering Law

March 23, 2021 JONNY BONNER

<https://www.courthousenews.com/utahs-anti-porn-crusade-marches-on-with-tech-filtering-law/>

Utah Governor Spencer Cox signed a bill Tuesday that calls for all smartphones and tablets sold in the Beehive State to have adult content filters.

(Pixabay image via Courthouse News)

SALT LAKE CITY (CN) — Utah has pushed forward with ambitious plans to require porn filters on cell phones and tablets, appeasing conservative lawmakers' ongoing campaign on decency in the Mormon stronghold.

Republican Governor Spencer Cox on Tuesday signed [House Bill 72](#), which calls for all smartphones and tablets sold in the Beehive State to have active adult content filters.

The so-called filter would “prevent the user of the device from accessing material that is harmful to minors on the device; enable certain users to deactivate the filter for the device or for specific content; and notify the user when content is filtered,” the bill reads.

The divisive measure, introduced by Republican state Senator Todd Weiler, allows for users to disable the filter through a passcode that phone makers would provide.

HB 72 applies to “smart phones activated in the state on or after January 1 of the year following the year this bill takes effect.” The rule, however, doesn't take effect until five other states pass equivalent laws. If none pass before 2031, the law stands to fade away without ever taking effect.

During a recent news conference on PBS-Utah, Cox said the move would send an “important message” about preventing children from accessing explicit content on the Web.

“We really want to empower parents,” Cox said. “If nothing else it sends an important message.”

ACLU of Utah, in opposition, tweeted that the rule “infringes upon the general public's First Amendment rights to freely access the internet.”

Adult film star Cherie DeVille, who recently called on Cox to veto the bill, [wrote](#) in an open letter that the regulations “would create more than a slippery slope for free speech — it would form a deadly slope that would send Utah residents' civil liberties off a hill.”

“Porn is far from the most dangerous aspect of cellphones for kids,” DeVille added, citing studies that link cellphones to an increase children's depression.

“It's hard to believe your fellow Republicans are fighting to protect kids' eyes when they're OK with children consuming violent games, movies, and television shows,” she wrote.

Utah's anti-porn crusade certainly isn't new news.

In 2016, former Governor Gary Herbert signed a resolution that declared porn a “public health crisis.”

That bill, also sponsored by Weiler, stated pornography use was “linked to lessening desire in young men to marry, dissatisfaction in marriage, and infidelity” and “perpetuates a sexually toxic environment.”

Cox, who took office in January, signed 10 bills in total on Tuesday, including amendments to rules on so-called microenterprise home kitchens, state liquor stores and county highway road funds. Cox has signed 456 pieces of legislation from the 2021 legislative session to date.