

Alabama Declares Porn a Public Health Crisis, but Will That Change Anything?

With Alabama's recent resolution, many hail this as the United States' general public finally waking up to the grim consequences of pornography addiction, but how effective will this declaration be?

Alabama has become the 16th state in the U.S. to acknowledge that pornography has become a public health crisis. Their resolution states:

"WHEREAS, pornography promotes and encourages sexually toxic expectations and behaviors, and it also contributes to the hyper-sexualization of children, adolescents, and adults;

"WHEREAS, because pornography treats women like objects and commodities for the viewers' use, it teaches younger girls and women that they are to be used and teaches boys and men to be users;

"WHEREAS, pornography increases the demand for sex trafficking by increasing the demand for prostitution and child sexual abuse images;

"WHEREAS, research indicates that pornography is potentially biologically addictive...

"WHEREAS, pornography use is linked to difficulty in forming or maintaining intimate relationships, lessening the desire in young men to marry...

"BE IT RESOLVED... That we recognize that pornography is a public health hazard that leads to a broad spectrum of individual and public health impacts and societal harms; furthermore, we recognize the need for education, prevention,

research, and policy change at the local, state, and national level in order to address the pornography epidemic that is harming the people of our State and nation.”

The declaration was passed 67 to 19 by their House of Representatives, a formal recognition of porn’s corrosive effect of people’s views of sex and ability to function normally in relationships.

The Power of Porn Over the Mind

Science and psychology have agreed for years that porn causes serious physiological and emotional issues.

An fMRI study at the Max Planck Institute noticed that the more porn individuals consumed, the smaller their brain striatum—the reward center—became, while another study by the University of Cambridge found porn addicts’ brain scans closely resembled substance abusers’ response to their drug of choice.

Biology professor and TED talk speaker Gary Wilson has accumulated a wide spread of studies on his website [Your Brain On Porn](#), which confirm that porn addiction is entirely capable of creating sexual dysfunctions and neurological disorders. All of this is confirmed in Amanda Maddox’s study, which found that people who didn’t partake in porn at all were twice as likely to stay faithful to their partner and reported higher levels of sexual satisfaction.

In a podcast episode about pornography addiction, guest speaker Nate Larkin shared his own struggle: “I didn’t understand the damage I was doing to myself.”

He elaborated, “I was allowing pornographers to define beauty for me in a way that eventually would blind me to the beauty of my wife. The way I was learning just to objectify women to see bodies and not people. The way sex became, in my own mind,

connected to lust rather than love, to taking rather than giving; and it was depersonalized, and it was about performing, not about being.

“All of the special, intimate blessings of marriage that come in that marital union—it would be years before I would begin to actually experience what it’s like to have that kind of marital love because I allowed it to be conditioned by a culture of pornography.”

Paul Maxwell, philosophy professor at Moody Bible Institute, gave a similar, grim diagnosis: “Pornography is a training session in the skill of using others for personal pleasure.”

Many of the best and brightest minds in their respective fields agree: Porn does nothing good for you. The question then becomes how we go about protecting ourselves and the young minds of children.

Pushing Porn Off the Internet

Many people’s first, and understandable, conclusion is that pornography should be banned from the internet.

Unfortunately, as David French pointed out in *The Dispatch*, “It’s been tried. It failed. Miserably. Few people now remember the story of *American Booksellers Association v. Hudnut*. In 1984, the city of Indianapolis (then led by Republican Mayor William Hudnut) enacted an ordinance that defined ‘pornography’ as a practice that discriminates against women.

“Indianapolis lost. No, it didn’t just lose. It got crushed. First, the trial court rejected the ordinance. Then the Supreme Court did something unusual—it summarily affirmed the court of appeals decision without argument. The consequences of decades of Supreme Court jurisprudence are clear—any attempt to ban pornography is a legal fool’s errand. It will not succeed.

“But I also question something else—should it succeed? We have learned through bitter experience that American efforts to ban various adult activities, including alcohol, marijuana, and illicit sex, have resulted in their own human costs.”

Part of the problem is that the creation and distribution of obscene material, especially that given to minors or depicting the sexual abuse of children, is already a federal crime.

Enforcing this to the level that many people want, though, entails some serious violations of privacy. Think China-levels of censorship.

In order to effectively ban all forms of internet porn, government officials would need the power to monitor all information flow to private devices, punitively blacklist any and all websites with questionable content (a guilty-until-proven-innocent approach), and aggressively punish those who defy the restrictions. All of these features are enabled by Fang Binxing’s “Golden Shield” software that allows the Chinese government to supervise their nation’s internet users.

“One 2016 Harvard study estimated that the Chinese government fabricates and posts approximately 448m comments on social media annually,” *The Guardian* noted. “A considerable amount of censorship is conducted through the manual deletion of posts, and an estimated 100,000 people are employed by both the government and private companies to do just this.”

If this doesn’t already seem like a George Orwell-esque dystopia, take it from someone who lived in China: The amount of control that the government had over everything we saw on the internet and television was both frightening and surreal.

How Do We Solve the Problem?

The U.S.’s Supreme Court seemingly will not legalize harsher methods of banning porn for fear of what other freedoms may be lost with that level of government control over the web, and

their concerns are sadly not without merit given human nature and how other countries' internet censorship programs work.

Was Alabama's declaration about the terrible consequences of porn toothless and a waste of time, then?

No. Anything that opens up honest discussion about the real harms and addictive power of pornography has value. "We in the church need to start being more intentional about dealing with this issue and not dealing with it as a superficial issue and not being afraid of it," stated Gary Wilkerson in a podcast episode about finding victory over porn addictions.

The Alabama resolution opens the door for private individuals to step forward and admit that they struggle with this addiction personally. It gives educators and families a guide to discuss this issue with children, who may already be exposed to porn. It allows for more nuanced discussions about how we might begin zoning the internet so that porn is much more difficult for children to access.

If we want a solution to pornography, then we have to be willing to speak openly and honestly about the consequences and then the solutions available to those with the addiction. We can't sit back, complain and wait for someone else to fix this problem for us. {eoa}

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