

Governor Declares This Is a 'Public Health Crisis'

Don't expect a tremendous outpouring of rage over this one.

At a bill signing earlier this week, Utah Gov. Gary Herbert declared pornography a "public health crisis," and announced his state would be leading the national fight against it. The problem of pornography is "rampant," he added, yet it "thrives in secrecy and silence," which prompted two bills out of his state's legislature.

He said those bills "start an open discussion" that will bring the "very real dangers" of pornography to light.

Herbert signed into law Senate Concurrent Resolution 9 and House Bill 155 at the event, which was packed with anti-pornography advocates and national experts. SCR 9 declares pornography a public health hazard and recognizes the need for increased education and research, while HB 155 requires computer technicians to report when they find child pornography on a work computer.

"The governor hopes that . 9 will encourage parents to have conversations with their children about the harmful effects of pornography and increase awareness of the health risks associated with this rampant problem," the Governor's Office stated in a press release following the signing ceremony. "Some schools in Utah have already chosen to host assemblies to teach youth about the addictive nature of pornography, similar to the way they are instructed about the harms of abusing drugs and alcohol. The governor commended these schools for taking action to educate and protect Utah children."

Herbert was joined by:

Dawn Hawkins, Executive Director for the National Center on Sexual Exploitation;

Clay Olsen, CEO of Fight the New Drug;

Brian Willoughby, Assistant Professor in the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University;

Pamela Atkinson, Board Chair for the Utah Coalition Against Pornography; and

Dr. Jennifer Brown, an advocate and concerned mother.

The advocates and experts all presented their research and outlined next steps for the fight against pornography during a press conference (see video below) that accompanied the bill signing. Recently, it was reported that pornography websites generate more visitors each month than Netflix, Amazon, and Twitter—combined.

“The fight is one we can win,” Herbert said. “But it begins with turning the light on the unsavory reality, which is what today’s bills will do.”

Although there was a lot of mockery initially over the bills’ introduction, there has been little outcry over their passage and adoption. Even those who have opposed the bill on First Amendment grounds have done so quietly.