

PRESS RELEASE 9-16-10

Today, Pedroli & Gauthier filed a lawsuit against Village Voice Media, LLC, which is doing business as backpage.com. This is the same company that owns the River Front Times and many other alternative newspapers around the country. The backpage.com is an internet website that allows advertisements to be placed for a fee and is very similar to Craigslist.

The suit was filed on behalf of an unnamed child, through her Mother, who was the victim of sex trafficking as a fourteen year old child. Her female pimp, who recently plead guilty in The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri to charges relating to the allegations raised in the lawsuit, used the backpage.com website to post advertisements which contained child pornography and advertised the child as available for sexual contacts.

This case is different from the many cases against internet content facilitators which have failed. To our knowledge this is the first case to proceed under the Child Abuse Victim's Rights Act (CAVRA) private cause of action statute, alleging that the facilitator was liable for aiding and abetting the person guilty of posting the content and perpetrating the criminal violations of law. Aiding and abetting can constitute a strong suspicion that these child crimes were being committed and that it failed to investigate for fear of what it would learn.

If we are successful, our hope is that the financial punishment will shut down the websites as we don't believe that these businesses will be able to ensure the age of all escorts posting on their websites in an economically feasible manner. We hope that, if any of these types of businesses incur possible liability for any child who is posted on their site, then the profitable business model fails.