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Nicholas Kristof Blames Backpage For Aiding Child Prostitution

**The Huffington Post** [Simon McCormack](#)

First Posted: 01/26/2012 3:30 pm Updated: 01/26/2012 3:56 pm

React



New York Times op-ed columnist Nicholas Kristof [has penned a scathing piece](#) about [Backpage](#) and the site's links to child prostitution.

[Kristof describes](#) the online classifieds site which includes a section for escorts to advertise, as a "godsend to pimps, allowing customers to order a girl online as if she were a pizza."

Kristof also includes examples of children as young as 13 being forced into prostitution and marketed on Backpage.

Rev. John Vaughn, a spokesperson for the [Groundswell](#) Coalition which has urged Backpage to ditch its "adult section," told *The Huffington Post* that he hopes Kristof's column will help educate the public on issues of sex trafficking and child prostitution.

"We believe that the shutting down of Backpage will serve as a deterrent and will continue a groundswell of support," Vaughn said.

[In a letter to Kristof](#), the legal council for Village Voice Media, the company that owns Backpage, said the site already works very closely with law enforcement, helping to curtail illegal activities.

"Of course, Village Voice Media stands against such repugnant criminal behavior," the letter states. "But we are not going to sit quietly while officeholders exploit crimes against kids for political purposes."

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The letter adds, "censorship will not rid the world of exploitation."

But Vaughn counters that Village Voice Media misses the point of his group's efforts.

"For us the bottom line is that the issue isn't about censorship," Vaughn said. It's about children being trafficked."

UPDATE Linda Smith, Former Washington Congresswoman and Founder of [Shared Hope International](#) tells *HuffPost* that even if pimps and child traffickers find some other venue besides Backpage, it's still worth trying to get the site to change its ways.

"It would be like saying 'there's going to be crime in our community anyway, so why fight it?'" Smith said.

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