

Monthly Columns

by Attorney General Jack Conway



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As schools let out for the summer, I want to remind Kentucky families about the importance of staying safe online. During summer break, many kids will turn to the Internet for entertainment and to socialize. It is more important than ever for parents to monitor their children's online activities. With your supervision, you can ensure that your child doesn't fall victim to cyberbullying or a cyberpredator.

Many Kentucky parents, school officials and community leaders have contacted my office and expressed concern about abusive posts, often targeted at kids, on Internet message board host Topix.com. In February, I expressed my significant concerns to Topix's CEO Chris Tolles about abusive posts in the website's "Forums and Polls" section as well as the \$19.99 fee Topix charges for expedited review of inappropriate posts.

The attorneys general from 22 other states and territories have now joined me in calling on Topix to eliminate the expedited review fee and to reduce the amount of time it takes to review and remove abusive, inappropriate and vulgar posts that can have a devastating effect on kids. I appreciate their support and look forward to working with Topix to improve its consumer protections.

Another troubling website is Chatroulette. A recent investigation by my Cybercrimes Unit found that this popular video chat website could easily put your child in contact with a sexual predator.

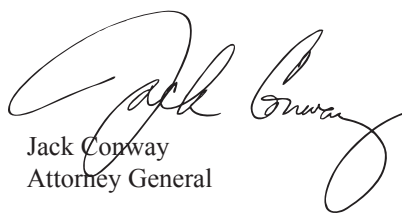
During a one-hour session on Chatroulette, my investigator was connected to 96 other participants. Of those, approximately 30% were engaged in some form of nudity or graphic sexual conduct.

Chatroulette requires users to be at least 16 years old, but there is no age verification tool for users. I strongly encourage parents to block this website from any home computer that can be accessed by children.

I've also encouraged students and parents across Kentucky to think before they post. Posting personal information on popular social networking sites, like Facebook or MySpace, could jeopardize your safety, admission to college or even employment.

I am proud of all that my office has done to educate thousands of Kentucky families about the dangers that exist online. My Cybercrimes Unit has also put a dent in child pornography and solicitation of minors on the Internet. To date, the Unit has seized nearly 70,000 child pornographic images and videos from the Internet and investigated more than 100 child pornography cases.

Be assured, I will continue to work every day to protect Kentucky families online and in their communities. Working together, we can make Kentucky a safer place to live, work and raise a family.



Jack Conway
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