

Utah porn warning label proposal gains despite some mocking

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SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Pornography should come with warning labels that say exposure to minors could be harmful, according to a Utah state lawmaker who is proposing fines of \$2,500 to companies that fail to comply. At least one pornography site is mocking the idea.

Republican state Rep. Brady Brammer wants the warning to say pornography “is known to the state of Utah to cause negative impacts to brain development, emotional development and the ability to maintain intimate relationships.”

It also suggests “such exposure may lead to harmful and addictive sexual behavior, low self-esteem, and the improper objectification of and sexual violence towards others, among numerous other harms.”

The bill is headed to the state House for debate after passing in a Judiciary Committee vote on Tuesday. Two Democrats voted against the proposal.

One pornography website mocked the bill by putting out a label on its content saying “porn may lead to decreased stress, increased happiness, and lower rates of teen pregnancy,” the Tribune reported.

If the label does not appear on print publication or is not displayed for 15 seconds before digital material, producers could be fined \$2,500 for each violation. One lawmaker, Republican Rep. Travis Seegmiller, said \$2,500 per violation didn’t seem steep enough.

“The nature of the damage is so extensive and severe and pervasive and destructive and horrific that to be honest ... this seems like chump change compared to what’s happening to our kids,” he said.

The bill’s enforcement process would be similar to California’s required warning labels about toxic substances, Brammer said last week.

Bill opponents have said the bill’s language is vague and could have unintended consequences for other content. Publications not considered pornographic by most people but deemed so by others could be sued, said Marina Lowe, staff attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union of Utah.

Legislative attorneys say a carefully crafted bill, where a warning label sticks to “factual content,” would likely survive a judicial review.

Brammer crafted the language of the warning label from a resolution passed by the state in 2016 declaring pornography a public-health crisis, citing its widespread availability online, he said.