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Do Dating Websites Perform Background Checks?

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WASHINGTON, D.C. (AHN) - As the online dating fad continues, new legislation on background checks arises. **The Florida background checks legislation requires online dating companies to show on their sites whether or not they provide background checks on their users, not force them to actually conduct the background checks.**

The new legislation requires online dating hosts like True.com to clearly indicate whether or not they do perform background checks on their members, something sites that don't conduct background checks object to.

President of Working to Halt Online Abuse, J.A. Hitchcock, says "It's the web sites that don't do background checks that are against this legislation, which begs the question 'What are they trying to hide'."

This push for this legislation has privacy advocates astonished. "The notion that we should be requiring yet another industry to do background checks is chilling," said Barry Steinhart, director of the American Civil Liberties Union's Technology and Liberty Program. "It hurtles us further into a surveillance society in which every action is going to be investigated by an entity with no accountability."

Hitchcock conducted an informal poll at three different universities, with many students in attendance. **When asked if they had tried online dating most of the audience raised their hands. When asked if they knew if that dating web site performed criminal background checks, they assumed the web sites did. He said many were upset that the online dating web sites did not inform potential members about what they did and didn't do.**

R-Kevin Ambler, House sponsor of the Florida background checks legislation has a positive outlook on the bill.

"We are becoming alarmed about the number of predators and felons so anything we can do to improve the odds and safety is a good thing, a step forward, so I have a very positive outlook on this legislation. It was very carefully tailored to be minimally intrusive to the business model but offers a fair level of protection."

Hitchcock says, "It all comes down to educating the public instead of letting them assume certain things are being done."

True.com is the first and only online dating site that offers criminal background checks.

The bill is due to pass into the next committee phase Tuesday April 26. It will then head to the house and senate for final vote.