

Statement of Attorney General Jim Hood Regarding Google Lawsuit
December 19, 2014

Over the past several years attorneys general worked with Google to get them to make significant changes in areas like child porn and illegal drug sales. Several years ago Google stopped any search results to a query on child porn and their autocomplete feature does not give suggestions on similar queries. In response to a letter I wrote Google CEO Larry Page on May 21, 2013, Google agreed to stop their autocomplete feature from suggesting "buy oxycodone online no prescription cod" when someone simply typed in the letters "buy oxycod." Google also took down YouTube videos that were in the search results on how to buy prescription drugs without a prescription.

We have accomplished much, but more needs to be done. For example, although search results vary based on time and location, today if a child types in the query "buy drugs," the first site populated is silkroad.org, which suggests alternatives for buying drugs. The second is canadadrugs.com, which is the same website from which my undercover agents purchased controlled amphetamines without a prescription in June of 2012. Our investigators used Google's autocomplete suggestion to find this website not requiring a prescription. Not only was this website listed in the search results, but it was also shown in the results margin as an advertiser. In other words, Google is raking in advertising dollars off of drug dealers, the same crime that the company was on probation for under a plea agreement with the federal government and the Rhode Island Attorney General. In the seven-page Non-Prosecution Agreement Google entered with the U. S. Department of Justice, Google agreed to pay half a billion dollars in a fine to avoid a possible felony.

On December 10, 2013, twenty-three attorneys general and I signed a letter to Google requesting yet another meeting. Google refused to delist or remove from its search results even known websites that were doing nothing but selling illegal substances, products or intellectual property.

In hopes of continuing to work with Google, without any fanfare or press release, my Consumer Protection Division issued an administrative subpoena asking for documents. Google sent more than 99,000 jumbled, unsearchable documents in a data dump. I agreed to give Google additional time to comply with our request and hoped we could reach an agreement. Instead, after the Sony hack, Google's General Counsel Kent Walker began blogging and feeding the media a salacious Hollywood tale. Now, feeling emboldened with its billions of dollars, media prowess and political power, some of its more excitable people have sued trying to stop the State of Mississippi for daring to ask some questions. We expect more from one of the wealthiest corporations in the world.

In an attempt to resolve some of the problems the states' chief law enforcement officers have raised, I am calling a time out, so that cooler heads may prevail. I will reach out to legal counsel Google's board of directors to negotiate a peaceful resolution to the issues affecting consumers that we attorneys general have pointed out in a series of eight letters to Google.

I strongly encourage everyone interested in this issue to read these eight letters and the Google plea agreement and reach their own conclusions about Google's conduct. The Sony emails themselves document that long before the hack many attorneys general were working to make our states safer for our children. It would be a discredit to the public interest not to question Google's actions and consider the consequences.

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