

# Rob Portman

## United States Senator for OHIO

WASHINGTON, D.C. – During an interview this morning on *Morning Joe*, U.S. Senator Rob Portman (R-OH) discussed the bipartisan *Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act* that he introduced with Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and two dozen of his colleagues. The bill will ensure that victims of online sex trafficking can get the justice they deserve and hold accountable websites like Backpage.com that are knowingly “*engaged in facilitating, assisting or supporting sex trafficking.*” The bill is a result of an 18-month-long investigation with Senator Claire McCaskill (D-MO).

Excerpts of the interview can be found below and a video can be found [here](#).

*“..This film ‘I Am Jane Doe.’, for anyone who hasn’t seen it, I recommend you do so. It’s on Netflix. It talks about our investigation and talks about exactly what Senator McCaskill just said which is that these websites like Backpage, which is considered by some to be the Walmart of sex trafficking, meaning that they are probably 80 percent of [all] the commercial sex traffic, on this one site. About three-quarters of the complaints that come in to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children come in through Backpage, so this is the site that does most of this. The problem is that they have hidden behind a piece of legislation that is sort of pre-active internet, back 21 years ago, that gives them what courts have said is immunity. But the courts have asked Congress to step in here. In terms of the tech companies, I think most tech companies are going to end up supporting this, but some have concerns that they think that this could somehow lead to lawsuits against them. That’s why we wrote it so narrowly. There’s a House bill that’s much broader, but our bill is very narrow. It says that you have to knowingly be engaged in facilitating, assisting or supporting sex trafficking. I don’t believe Google does that, so I don’t think they have a concern here. It’s not about them, it is about websites that are exploiting women and children right now as we talk. We believe that this legislation is critical, as, frankly, does everybody in the community that’s been working on this. The lawyers, again, the courts have asked to step in on this one, to stop this horrendous practice.”*

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