

## Online Dating Safety-Florida HB 411

Another state now seems poised to push through legislation in an attempt to protect online dating site customers. Florida currently has pending legislation requiring sites to disclose the security features they provide to their customers.

Following the lead of New Jersey, which became the first state to pass legislation to protect online daters back in January, Florida is hoping to pass "The Internet Predator Awareness and Online Safety Act, HB 411." This bill would require that all online dating sites to disclose to their prospective and current customers whether or not they provide security checks on their clients.

The Florida bill goes further and requires dating sites to disclose what types of background and security checks they are doing. The minimum it hopes to include in each background check is a search for felony, misdemeanor, and sexual offense convictions.

If the dating service does not provide background checks on their members, the state of Florida wants the online dating site to communicate "clearly and conspicuously" that the site does not provide criminal background checks.

The bill is being pushed through by Rep. Kevin Ambler, who has tried to push this bill through on 4 other occasions. He believes that the main constituency that this protects is senior women, either widowed or divorced, who seem to be most vulnerable to internet fraud.

Widowed seniors tend to be ideal targets for unscrupulous Romeos. They are desperate for companionship after many years of marital harmony. Most importantly, they tend to have healthy savings accounts, which is what online predators are looking for.

"Sweetheart Swindles" are not a new thing, but there appears to be a steady rise in their occurrence within the past few years. These crimes focus on predators focusing on desperate singles who are tired of being alone and willing to try a lot of things to find that special someone.

The National Consumers League began tracking these sweetheart crimes back in July of 2007, and they reported 184 cases to close out the calendar year. On average, the losses reported by the victims in these schemes amounted to just over \$3,000 per person.

These are just reported cases, and I think it's safe to speculate that many victims of these crimes never bother to report them. Once a victim has been taken, they are often too embarrassed to contact authorities and report the incident.

Opponents of the bill argue that this legislation may lull dating site users into a false sense of security. When using an online dating service, it is imperative to protect your personal information. Use your common sense, and if something doesn't seem right, it most likely isn't.

Money should never be a topic of discussion when talking to someone online. If someone that you've just met starts to open up to you and discuss their financial hardships, it should be an immediate warning that something is not right.

Background checks could be a great addition to any online dating service, but they will only provide you with a small degree of protection. You work awful hard for your money and it would be a shame to see you part with it due to a lapse of common sense.

### About the Author

Jim McMenamin is the webmaster and creator of [MacsDatingSite.com](http://MacsDatingSite.com), a blog dedicated to the various issues of online dating. For a limited time, Jim is giving away two free eBooks, 10 Tips To Writing Your Online Dating Profile as well as 101 Steps To A Happy Relationship, when you sign up for his [newsletter](#).

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