

**AUCTION**  
41 New Condos  
Beach Close Living

**BIDS FROM \$375k**  
www.LaPlayaCourt.com  
(424) 702-2478 [click here](#)

Jobs | Cars.com | Real Estate | Rentals | Foreclosures | Hello Visitor | Register | Sign-In | More Classifieds

LAT Home | Print Edition | All Sections

Los Angeles Times | Business

 SEARCH

Save on home delivery. **ORDER NOW!**

Technology | Personal Finance | Small Business | Economy | Energy | Careers | Showbiz | Real Estate | Autos | Business

You are here: LAT Home > Business News



DAN NEIL:

# The fight against erectile dysfunction ads

Email | Print | Text | RSS

Business

- » Technology
- » Personal Finance
- » Small Business
- » Economy
- » Energy
- » Careers
- » Showbiz
- » Real Estate
- » Autos
- » Business A-Z

Blogs

- » Money & Co.
- » LA Land
- » Up to Speed
- » To Live and Buy in LA
- » Entertainment News & Buzz

News/Opinion

- California | Local
- National
- World
- Business
- Sports
- Washington
- Science
- Environment
- Opinion

Arts/Entertainment

- Entertainment
- The Guide
- Company Town
- Arts & Culture
- Calendar
- The Envelope
- TV Listings
- Movie Showtimes

Living

- Travel
- Health
- Autos
- Home & Garden
- Food
- Image
- Books
- Brand X Magazine

- Data Desk
- Video
- Photography
- Obituaries



"Smilin' Bob" stars in a TV campaign for male-performance-enhancement supplement Enzyte.

Dan Neil  
May 19, 2009

Having largely sorted out the economy and foreign wars, Rep. James P. Moran (D-Va.) moved on to other pressing matters of state last month when he introduced the Families for ED Advertising Decency Act (H.R. 2175), a bill that calls for the Federal Communications Commission to "treat as indecent" ads for erectile dysfunction cures between the hours of 6 a.m. and 10 p.m.

Viva Viagra, indeed.

This is his second attempt to get the ads run by Pfizer (Viagra), Lilly (Cialis) and GlaxoSmithKline (Levitra) toned down; in 2005, he claimed to have reached an agreement with representatives of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America.

Four years later, the ads are ever more pervasive and, according to Moran, more explicit.

Here's a fun if staggering fact: ED drug manufacturers spent \$313.4 million on measured media last year, according to TNS Media Intelligence. That's up from \$237.2 million in 2007.

I realize that all the world's men can be roughly divided into two camps: those who have suffered from ED and those who think it's hilarious. Even though I am a raging liberal atheist appalled by Americans' obsessive-phobic complex over sexual matters, I am also the father of two little girls. I would really prefer not to have to explain the erection-lasting-more-than-four-hours thing to them while we're watching NASCAR. So, yes, while it's a slightly ridiculous issue, I sort of admire Moran's willingness to be the stooge for it.

After all, broadcast advertising falls into a special class of discourse, insofar as we choose the programs we do and don't want to watch but have almost no control over the advertising we are exposed to. Therefore it seems the bar of probity must be at least a little higher than it is with programming. Again, point to Moran.

There was a fascinating error in the reporting of the congressman's bill that is quite telling. The media weekly AdAge and others reported that the bill's ambit included ads for "male-performance-enhancement" products such as Enzyte and ExtenZe.

ADVERTISEMENT

REPLAY

Up to 30% off Business Class fares to Hong Kong

cathaypacific.com/us

[Book now >](#)

Airline of the Year 2009

Terms and restrictions apply

CATHAY PACIFIC

## Recent Columns:

1. The fight against erectile dysfunction ads  
May 19, 2009
2. VW Routan: Mediocre, barely  
May 15, 2009
3. Chrysler will feel unfulfilled in its Italian romance  
May 1, 2009
4. Tesla S: a model citizen  
April 29, 2009
5. Bentley Continental GTC Speed: astonishing and surreal  
April 24, 2009

>> More Dan Neil

Most Viewed | Most E-mailed

1. California voters kill budget measures
2. California voters exercise their power -- and that's the problem
3. Palm hopes its Pre is a handful for competition
4. Kobe scores 40 as Lakers come back to beat Nuggets
5. Lakers' victory is the perfect end to a perfect day
6. Behind the scenes of the auto emissions deal
7. Kobe Bryant puts it on the line
8. Lakers' escape isn't too sweet
9. Rapper's shooting may have had roots in Atlanta dispute
10. Chu defeats Cedillo in 32nd Congressional District

ADVERTISEMENT

[Crosswords/Sudoku](#)  
[Your Scene](#)

[Blogs](#)  
[Columnists](#)  
[Print Edition](#)  
[Readers Rep](#)  
[Corrections](#)  
[All Sections](#)

**Buy, Sell & More**

[Jobs](#)  
[Cars](#)  
[Real Estate](#)  
[Foreclosure Sale](#)  
[Rentals](#)  
[Personals](#)  
[Local Values](#)  
[Coupons](#)  
[Newspaper Ads](#)

**Place an Ad**

[In the Newspaper](#)  
[Online](#)

**Settings/Services**

[Sign In](#)  
[Register](#)  
[E-Mail Newsletters](#)  
[RSS Feeds](#)  
[Help](#)  
[Contact Us](#)  
[L.A. Times Archives](#)  
[Reprint Requests](#)  
[Work for Us](#)

**Home Delivery**

[Customer Support](#)  
[Subscribe](#)

Los Angeles Times  
**NOW ON KINDLE**  
 >>>

Los Angeles Times  
**eEdition**  
 Click Here

Collect the love  
 ORDER NOW

However, a quick check with the congressman's office reveals that prohibiting male-performance-enhancement products was never considered, even though spokesman Austin Durrer agreed that the congressman would also find these ads "egregious."

If I had to reverse-engineer this error, I would say that some reporter unconsciously lumped the male-enhancement commercials in with the ED ads because they not only deal with the same anatomical real estate but also are vastly more embarrassing to watch.

Daddy, who is Smilin' Bob and why is he smiling?

So why didn't Moran go after these ads? At least the ED commercials take a schwing at being tasteful, portraying young-at-heart couples forever seemingly renewing their vows at some tropical getaway, with his-and-her bathtubs handy. According to the narrative logic of the ED ads, these pills are the elixir vitae of long-term monogamy. Heck, St. Paul would approve.

No redeeming subtext enters into the male-enhancement ads.

And never mind matters of taste. What about truth in advertising? How is it that the male-enhancement products can continue to make their outsize claims despite zero clinical evidence that they work as advertised?

For that, you can thank the 1994 Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act, which severely limited the Food and Drug Administration's authority to crack down on unsubstantiated dietary claims. Supplements -- everything from nutraceutical energy drinks to the male-enhancement potions -- fall under the authority of the Federal Trade Commission.

So while these ads have had to moderate their language somewhat (both the makers of ExtenZe and Enzyte have found themselves in legal hot water over false advertising), the FDA is powerless to move against them.

The FTC, it seems, has bigger fish to fry.

[dan.neil@latimes.com](mailto:dan.neil@latimes.com)

Digg StumbleUpon Reddit Mixx [ShareThis](#)

**Ultra Motor's A2B Metro**



A power-on-demand electric bicycle, no pedaling is required unless you want some light exercise.

**This is South Africa**



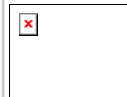
A week in the former European colony reveals a dynamic and diverse country with eye-popping scenery. [Photos](#) | [Video](#)

**Shoes good for 26.2 miles**



Training for the L.A. Marathon? Here are some suggested footwear.

**Meet the cast of 'Glee'**



The high school musical premieres, so here's the players to know. [Photos](#) | [Story](#) | [Review](#)

Save over 50% off the newsstand price. [Click here to subscribe to The Times.](#)

ADS BY GOOGLE

Size in 30 days or less  
 Increase size, volume and endurance in 30 days or less. 110% Guaranteed  
[www.ErosLaboratories.com](http://www.ErosLaboratories.com)

Prelox - Free Bottle  
 Enhance male pleasure & performance with L-arginine. Try Prelox now!  
[www.PurityProducts.com](http://www.PurityProducts.com)

Hormone Therapy for Men  
 Southern CA Physicians Specializing in Natural Bioidentical Hormones.  
[www.BodyLogicMD.com](http://www.BodyLogicMD.com)

**Comerica Bank**

**Strong Bank Ratings.**

**Strong Capital Position.**

**Strong Reasons To Bank With Confidence.**

[Click Here](#)  
 to see where we stand.

Member FDIC. Equal Opportunity Lender.

**Real Estate Headlines**

1. 'Run's House' sisters lease Beverly Hills Post Office-area home for \$10,000 a month
2. 'Laguna Beach's' Kristin Cavallari lists in, well, Laguna Beach
3. Singer Leona Lewis leases Hollywood Hills house for nearly \$9,000 a month.
4. >> More Hot Property
5. Distressed property sales hit upscale condos

**Mexico Under Siege**



The drug war at our doorstep  
[Video Q&A](#) | [Photos](#) | [Interactive map](#)

[and Careers](#)

[Glendale News Press](#) | [Grocery Coupons](#) | [Zap2it](#)

[\(For Sale By Owner\)](#) | [Open Houses](#)

---

Copyright 2009 Los Angeles Times  
202 West 1st Street, Los Angeles, California, 90012

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Home Delivery](#) | [Reprint Requests](#) | [Help & Services](#) | [Contact](#) | [Site Map](#)