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Bill signing finally outlaws indoor prostitution in R.I.

2:04 PM Tue, Nov 03, 2009 | [Permalink](#)

Lynn Arditi [✉ Email](#)



Cited in Coyote Publishing v. Miller, No. 07-16633 archived on April 23, 2010

Governor Carcieri signs legislation making indoor prostitution illegal in Rhode Island Tuesday. Among those with the governor, from left to right are: state Sen. Paul V. Jabour, Rhode Island State Police Col. Brendan Doherty, Attorney General Patrick Lynch, First Lady Sue Carcieri, state Rep. Elaine Coderre, state Rep. Joanne Giannini, and state Rep. Roberto DaSilva. Providence Journal / Kathy Borchers

PROVIDENCE, R.I. -- Governor Carcieri signed into law legislation [to outlaw indoor prostitution in Rhode Island](#) at a State House ceremony Tuesday afternoon.

The signing closes a nearly 30-year-old loophole in the state's prostitution laws that has allowed prostitutes to work legally out of brothels, strip clubs, homes or anywhere else -- as long as it's indoors.

"For almost 30 years Rhode Island has had the terrible distinction of being the only state outside certain counties in Nevada where indoor prostitution is not considered a crime," Carcieri said.

The legislation, sponsored by Rep. Joanne M. Giannini, D-Providence, and Sen. Paul V. Jabour, D-Providence, the governor said, will help protect the state's most vulnerable residents and enhance the quality of life in Rhode Island.

[It was approved almost overwhelmingly late last week](#) by the General Assembly, which was meeting in special session.

In addition to the legislation's sponsors, the attendants at the ceremony included R.I. Atty. Gen. Patrick C. Lynch and State Police Col. Brendan P. Doherty.

The new law "sends a distinct message to any group (which) thinks they could use Rhode Island in furtherance of their illicit business," State Police Col. Doherty said. "The bottom line is commercial sex is now clearly illegal" in Rhode Island.

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Lynch said that the new law will "end a blemish" on the state and give law enforcement the tools they need to investigate and prosecute prostitution and related criminal activity.

"Does this mean prostitution will be eliminated in Rhode Island forever?" Giannini asked. "Of course not. But it means Rhode Island will no longer be a safe haven for pimping and trafficking, and the victimization of young women."

The law makes indoor prostitution a misdemeanor crime punishable, for first offenders, by up to six months in prison and a fine of up to \$1,000, or both. However, the law empowers judges to erase the criminal convictions of first offenders.

Customers or "johns" face the same penalties as prostitutes, but without the possibility of having their criminal record expunged.



Tags [Carcieri](#) [Providence RI](#) [Rhode Island General Assembly](#)

Comments

sib said:

I guess this law makes my partner of 20+ years a prostitute. After all, I pay the mortgage and in return I receive various domestic favors.

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 2:16 PM
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[SmokeyJoeWood](#) said:

And just like that, a whole new tier of black market crime was created in RI. Way to go, Governor. You just created a fortune for pimps and thugs, all in the name of "family values".

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 2:46 PM
[Report Abuse](#)

David Caruso said:

From what I'm reading in the comments, it does like no one's leaving...

puts on sunglasses
with a Happy Ending.

YEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 2:53 PM
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Harold said:

It took longer than it should have but at least the loophole is finally closed. If nothing else, this gives law enforcement the opportunity to combat this illegal activity. Whether they do or not is up to them. Everyone who helped get this law passed deserves credit.

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 3:10 PM
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Jlc said:

To sib,
I hope your partner didn't read your comment.

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 3:18 PM
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the CFDNTL said:

*Cited in Coyote Publishing v. Miller,
No. 07-16633 archived on April 23, 2010*

well there goes my saturday nights! Now i have to spend time with my girlfriend now..
..in all seriousness..these politicians in RI make me laugh. Yes they have created a new tier of crime in this state. They have based these desicions based on their own "morals". Whos to say we have to have the same "morals" as these crooks..
..this at least should have been up to the voters to decide at some point. Not corrupt politicians who want to get their name on a bill for future bragging rights. I do not see anything wrong with 2 individuals haveing a good time behind closed doors...away from the public..and leaving happy. Pretty close to marriage. I also do not get how these politicians come up with these "moral value arguements" when they also want to legalize gay marriage....Well, ill tell you..those arent my "morals"..but who am i to decide. I hate this state.

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 3:40 PM

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the CFDNTL said:

In addition...thank you lawmakers..for creating another crime in this state you cannot handle.

How about focusing on the poverty, the murder rate, and unemployment in this embarrassing establishment we call a state.

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 3:46 PM

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Moe said:

"Illicit business", but selling cigarettes, liquor and promoting gambling is ok because the state gets their cut. I would think those three do more for the denegration of quality of life for most Rhode Islanders than consenting adults having sex behind closed doors. The "Gov" looks pretty happy as he signs the bill. I wonder if he realizes how much he has just endangered women because of this?

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 4:04 PM

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Deb-Z said:

It is about time this state stands behind solid morals in a decision to ban indoor prostitution. We do not need our children to be turned into prostitutes by drug pushers and pimps. Organized crime is still controlling RI but it is nice to see a small bite has been taken out of this crime.

Adolescent human trafficking is a huge industry. The law enforcement officials need a law to go after these pimps and organized crime officials.

Spreading diseases and encouraging women to sell their bodies for monies that frequently go to a third party; pimp or drug pusher are no way for this state to be labeled nor for the children of these women to be raised!

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 4:07 PM

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dumb&dumber said:

WOW! Thank goodness we finally have this legislation passed. Now I don't have to see all the hookers around my complex anymore. Now where exactly are all the cops coming from to enforce this new law? If only the Governor & the General Assembly could put half the effort into a balanced budget.

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 4:09 PM

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Wanderlust said:

Place your bets-- which of this shower of signatories will be the first to be shown to be a punter and to join the Eliot Spitzer Hall of Hypocrites?

*Cited in Coyote Publishing v. Miller,
No. 07-16633 archived on April 23, 2010*

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 4:17 PM

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Billy said:

This is a giant waste of time. Pimps love this new law since everyone knows blackmarket prices are always higher and now pimps can also tell the girls that they're needed to protect them from the police.

RI could have been smart and taxed/regulated the industry but that would require someone in the GA to pull their head out of their own behind.

The GA and the governor can't solve any real problems in this state but hey when they need to get tough they can pick on prostitutes.

What a joke.

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 4:34 PM

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Kahne said:

"The law makes indoor prostitution a misdemeanor crime punishable, for first offenders, by up to six months in prison and a fine of up to \$1,000, or both. However, the law empowers judges to erase the criminal convictions of first offenders."

So the government gets \$1,000 per offense, from those that get arrested, so who is the pimp now??

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 4:43 PM

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Onewhoknows said:

This wont even be a factor in prostitution. The police have a lot more important issues to deal with, not to mention budget restrictions. Giannini the Dag accomplished nothing. Long live the providers lol

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 5:14 PM

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bill said:

I'm packing next year because ri has just become a communist state to live in. these crooks are controlling our lives, so it time to move out where there is more freedom to live and do what we want to do and how we spend our monies.

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 5:52 PM

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Mike said:

Hey Bill,
where are you moving to because every other state makes prostitution illegal. Pahrump, Nevada? Don't think you would last a week in that desert sinkhole.

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 6:55 PM

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Inara said:

I wonder if we'll ever realize that sex is a basic need, and can be treated in a clean, disease-free, respectable way. Free health clinics, regulations and education can combat the crime without creating more powerful pimps or destroying young girls' lives. Long live Firefly!

@ David Caruso
Money can't buy you love...
puts on sunglasses

...anymore.

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 7:06 PM

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Cal35 said:

Nice job legislators. Go pat yourselves on the backs for having done 'something'. We have so many other real problems to be dealt with and they all go and waste time with what is, in effect a 'nonproblem' and then this will direct more wasted time for police officials to go 'clean up' prostitution INSTEAD of mobsterism, gangsaism and white collar crimes. I think that most Rhode Islanders saw this as a nonissue yet the reps went after this...because it's one of those easy issues that will never have any strong opponents given the nature of the issue (ANYbody supporting continuation of indoor prostitution-- god forbid-- would be painted as a sinner.

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 7:11 PM

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Mr. V said:

Imagine putting all this gusto into a bill that addresses the needs of only a miniscule portion of the population!

The real issues are the economy and RI's enormous budget deficit. Do-gooders and moralists seem to think that women who used to ply their trade indoors will now close up shop. Think again.

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 7:31 PM

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[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 7:34 PM

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srl said:

How're they gonna enforce it? And then administer the new law?

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 7:45 PM

[Report Abuse](#)

srl said:

How do they plan to enforce this new law and starting when? And in what court will the new law be administered?

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 7:46 PM

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Davey said:

Whatta joke, it's the governance of this state that's the true "terrible distinction". Rhode Island is renowned mostly for its' abundance of corruption and graft.

It's a real shame - Rhode Island is truly a lovely state, but with such a disgustingly ugly system of rule.

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 8:09 PM

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No. 07-16633 archived on April 23, 2010

kerry said:

thy all look so happy^
wow can ri be any more pathetic.
so they hate
doesnt mean they going to catch all the 350 girls working in the state of ri.
what about the johns. it is a waste to punish
all.
go after what you really wanted to go after.
the brothel houses the spas the pimps the
street walkers all of those that arent being
real to this line of work. so after 30 years
it closes. ok. every state has adult
services with escorts doing the right
thing. maybe a little extra after time and companionship but thats a matter of choice
between two adults. so porno isnt illegal.
last i checked girl gets paid getting
nailed on all different sized screens.
why do the spas and brothel houses and
pimps have to affect the females who are
actually accompanying a gentleman with satisfaction. since obama came around ri
has been different in a bad way. the drugs
the rapes, murders and other crimes are more important than a man wanting to spend
time
with a female. hasnt been a crime in ri.
why make it illegal like there is a crime
from it everyday.

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 8:12 PM

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Running for office... said:

WoW... just another government knucklehead trying to tell you how to live your life.
where does it end ... its only going to get worse... all these government officials telling you
whats best for you ... we are grown men and women we can make our own decisions. I'm
so tired of these new laws coming out and taking our freedoms away... whats next tattoo
numbers on your forearm to identify you ...oh yea that right thats already happened and
look what the results were..stop telling people how to live there lives and fix the real
problems like, jobs, food, health care, homelessness, wars, bailout monies (wow that was
brilliant good job paying you rich friends to fix there yachts) oh yea lets see all these high
government officials after they get out of office and open there businesses and all the deals
they have acquired from there term in office where is there morality now... stop the
madness and do the right thing, don't do things for your own personal gain do it for the
people of the state... the more I listen to these politicians I cant believe there in office ...
Sorry for rambling on but I could go on forever there are way to many things that need to
be addressed and for the right reasons..

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 8:25 PM

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Scott said:

Wow Deb Z, that sounds like experience talking. All they did was push it underground and
not in the open where they are checked out. Let the diseases of the illegal trade take more
than Swine flu. Good Job GA. Can't fix the budget, but indoor prostitution is gone. Now the
preachers just have to use the back door.

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 8:31 PM

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taylor said:

The oldest occupation in the world!! How will the popo know if someone is selling
themselves from their homes??

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 8:56 PM

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Harold said:

*Cited in Coyote Publishing v. Miller,
No. 07-15033 archived on April 23, 2010*

To those enlightened souls who have a problem with society adopting a set of common values it deems appropriate; YOU are the problem! If you have issues with this then by all means, move to some place like the Socialist Republic of Vermont.

Thankfully there are still people left who have a moral compass.

For the rest of you, there's always Vegas.

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 9:30 PM

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Teresa Cox said:

Thank God it finally happened!!!! To think that next to the state of Nevada, the littlest state in the United States, Rhode Island, had allowed prostitution as long as it was indoors. The Cadillac Lounge and the Foxy Lady is going down. Even one life that was lost because of these dispicable acts was too many. People can excuse it by saying it is the oldest profession in the world, but it doesn't make selling one's body and giving sexual favors for money right. The leaders in state government really do have a conscious and virtue. My praise and thanks to Governor Carcieri and the majority voters who overwhelming passed this law. Christmas came early this year!!!! Thanks more than a million!

[Link](#) | November 3, 2009 10:35 PM

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Geez said:

Reading the other comments here it makes me realize how little people know about laws and what their law makers are doing. First there wasn't a "loophole." There just wasn't a law against it, therefore it wasn't illegal until there was a law against it. The government doesn't "allow" you to do anything, we allow them to control us. Secondly, this law will do nothing against trafficking. Trafficking and pimping was illegal before this law, before this bill was signed if a woman was a victim of a pimp or a trafficker she could walk up to any police officer and report that she was a prostitute AND a victim and had no fear of prosecution. Yes before this bill there were women who were forced, either overtly or just by the situation they are in (drugs, money, etc) but there at least existed the possibility that the end to that part of their life wouldn't be a jail cell. This will cause more organized crime as these women will turn to the organizations that are used to dealing in illicit things (drugs, gambling, weapons) and will have to give them a cut further fueling their enterprises, more violence against these women as assaults and rapes against prostitutes will not be reported for fear of prosecution of THE VICTIM, and a greater risk to public health as if a suspected prostitute is arrested with condoms that can be used as evidence against her as proof of intent. So, they won't carry them, and won't use them.

In my opinion, the way it was before this law was the ideal way to control the societal and public health issue of prostitution. In Nevada women are forced to only work in a brothel making the brothel owner a de facto pimp and beholden to only them. In RI, as well as Canada, Great Britain, France, Germany, Switzerland and many others, the law addressed the exploitation of women by pimps and traffickers, protected them from ancillary crimes such as rape and assaults, and then normally private charities or other organizations provided pathways out of that life for these women in a way that did not damage their futures as the new RI law will with a misdemeanor and jail time on their record.

[Link](#) | November 4, 2009 1:14 AM

[Report Abuse](#)

sports9999 said:

Well, now there is absolutely no reason to visit the sinkhole they call Rhode Island.

[Link](#) | November 5, 2009 3:53 AM

[Report Abuse](#)

Will said:

Well honestly all this will do is make the business more shady and more lucrative. Pimps will make more and have a stronger hold on these women. If you think it was bad indoors wait till you have street walkers. Good luck RI.

[Link](#) | November 28, 2009 12:54 AM

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