

Decriminalized Prostitution: Impunity for Violence and Exploitation

The original paper [↗](#) contains 11 sections, with 10 passages identified by our machine learning algorithms as central to this paper.

Paper Summary

SUMMARY PASSAGE 1

Introduction

From 1980 to 2009, prostitution in Rhode Island was decriminalized. Prostitution was not prohibited or regulated by law if it was performed indoors. The lack of laws or regulations created a unique and permissive legal, economic, and cultural environment for the growth of sex businesses.

SUMMARY PASSAGE 2

Methods

Therefore, this Article only focuses on the decriminalization of indoor prostitution in Rhode Island.

SUMMARY PASSAGE 3

I. Decriminalization Of Indoor Prostitution

In the late 1970s, residents in some areas of Providence (the capital city of Rhode Island) were calling for the city to act on the problem of street prostitution. Residents complained about the harassment of female residents and the impact on their community. At the time, prostitution was a felony that resulted in complicated and drawn out prosecutions and appeals.

SUMMARY PASSAGE 4

A. Growth Of Prostitution In Rhode Island

There has been no contemporary or historic research done on other types of prostitution, such as the prostitution occurring at strip clubs, private clubs, hotels, and residential brothels. After the new prostitution and human trafficking laws were passed, sex traffickers who were arrested told police they came from out-of-state and brought victims with them because indoor prostitution was legal in Rhode Island. 91

SUMMARY PASSAGE 5

B. Increase In Asian Spa-Brothels

New brothels opened at an increasing pace as brothel operators learned that Rhode Island lacked laws prohibiting or regulating indoor prostitution. Concurrently, sex buyers learned about decriminalized prostitution, and the demand for sex businesses Shapiro documented the increase in the number of Asian brothels from 1998 until 2009. She found that in 1998, there were two or three Asian spa-brothels.

SUMMARY PASSAGE 6

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He said he needed it because of his "lifestyle" and to protect his women. The burgeoning sex industry in Rhode Island and unregulated nature of indoor prostitution attracted predators who targeted women in the sex industry. The cases of attempted robberies and assaults against women engaged in prostitution increasingly alarmed law enforcement officials and the general public in Rhode Island.

SUMMARY PASSAGE 7

E. Teenage Girls Legally Employed In Strip Clubs

Although there was no law against hiring teens WAKE FOREST LAW REVIEW [Vol. 52 to strip in clubs, the Providence Board of Licenses asked ten clubs to voluntarily sign a pledge not to hire teens younger than eighteen. During the debate about decriminalized prostitution in Rhode Island, the focus had been on the Asian brothels, but this case highlighted that sexual exploitation was also happening in the strip clubs. Media stories started appearing that described the open sexual exploitation in the clubs.

SUMMARY PASSAGE 8

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Often, the old and new brothels seemed to be connected. For example, the same photos, descriptions, and formatting would be used in advertisements, the same registered agents were used to incorporate the new location, and the same managers' vehicles were seen at the new location. The cat and mouse game between the Providence city authorities and the Asian brothels reinforced the need for new laws that ended decriminalized prostitution.

SUMMARY PASSAGE 9

G. Decriminalized Prostitution And The Consequences For Investigating Sex Trafficking

The program, called the Innocence Lost National Initiative, required coordination with state and local law enforcement agencies. Because Rhode Island had no law on indoor prostitution, local and state police had no authority to investigate prostitution. A letter to Rhode Island Governor Donald Carcieri from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children stated, Under current Rhode Island law, commercial sex between adults inside a building is considered a private activity and is thus protected.

SUMMARY PASSAGE 10

Conclusion

In October 2009, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed several laws aimed at ending decriminalized prostitution, sexual exploitation, and human trafficking. These included a law criminalizing prostitution, a comprehensive human trafficking law, and a law prohibiting minors from working in the adult entertainment industry. These three new laws marked the end of a legal and commercial era in which the sexual exploitation of women and girls through prostitution was a legitimate form of economic development and a high-profit enterprise for business owners.