

Myths and Facts about Nevada Legal Prostitution

What does legalization of prostitution mean?

Legal prostitution is state-sponsored prostitution. Legal prostitution means that the state of Nevada legally permits the buying and selling of women in prostitution. Nevada's counties collect taxes from the sales of women to men who buy them (johns or tricks).

In Nevada legal prostitution, the counties are the pimps, collecting taxes. In legal prostitution the john is welcomed as a legitimate consumer. Since we know that prostitution always harms women, the legalized buying and selling women is in effect the promotion of and profiting from women's poverty, childhood sexual abuse, sexual harassment and sexual exploitation.

Similar in effect to legal prostitution, decriminalized prostitution is even more extreme. It means that all laws regarding prostitution would be removed. In other words, buying a woman would be the social and legal equivalent to buying toilet paper. Prostitution in all its forms - street, brothel, escort, massage - would be legally permitted. Pimps and traffickers the world over would become Nevada's new businessmen, Johns would be welcomed consumers.

Regardless of its legal status, prostitution is extremely harmful to those in it. Legalization of prostitution does not decrease the physical and the emotional safety of women in prostitution. **Wherever legal prostitution exists, nearby illegal prostitution increases.**

There is no way to make prostitution "a little bit better" any more than it is possible to make domestic violence "a little bit better." Prostitution is a profoundly harmful institution. Who does it harm the most? The woman who is prostituting is hurt the worst. She is hurt psychologically as well as physically. There is scientific evidence for this.

Should we arrest women in prostitution? No.

Almost all women in prostitution are there as a last resort, they don't "choose" prostitution the way someone chooses a career as an x-ray technician.

81% of the women in the Nevada legal brothels prostitution urgently want to escape it. For information based on research interviews of the women in the legal brothels see *Prostitution and Trafficking in Nevada: Making the Connections* which can be ordered at www.nevadacoalition.org

Let's focus on the real predators: the johns who assume that they are entitled to buy women for sex. These are the perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse who should be arrested, not the women who are bought.

Let's shut down the legal brothels and instead offer women, men and children in prostitution real choices.

Women tell us that they need stable housing, social services, medical treatment, and job training in order to get out of prostitution. That's what they should receive – not more restrictive coercion in the legal brothels which many women describe as "little prisons."

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<p>MYTH: Legalization of prostitution will stop illegal prostitution</p>	<p>FACT: Legalization of prostitution in Nevada, Germany, Australia and the Netherlands has resulted in an <i>increase</i> in illegal, hidden, and street prostitution. Decriminalization and legalization promote sex trafficking. Germany and the Netherlands are currently reconsidering whether to get rid of legal prostitution because of these social problems.</p>
<p>MYTH: Legal prostitution protects prostitutes from rape and physical assaults.</p>	<p>FACT: Women can report rapes and assaults to the police under current laws. The problem is that contempt toward prostitutes stays the same whether prostitution is legal or illegal. Women are frequently raped in escort and brothel prostitution, according to a number of studies. Almost everyone in prostitution was raped as a child <i>before</i> she got into it. Incest and rape are boot camp for prostitution.</p>
<p>MYTH: Nevada’s rural counties reap economic benefits from legal prostitution. The rural economies would not survive without the brothels.</p>	<p>FACT: Pimps tell women in prostitution: You’ll get rich! You’ll make \$15,000 a week? They also lie to Nevada’s citizens, telling them that rural counties are supported by brothels. It’s actually the other way around: the counties are supporting the brothels. By the time licensing, policing, and other state-paid tasks are performed, most counties with legal brothels barely break even. In both northern and southern Nevada, major developers have stayed out of the state because of counties’ proximity to legal prostitution.</p>
<p>MYTH: When prostitution is legal, licensed brothel owners do not hire illegal, underage or trafficked women.</p>	<p>FACT: Legalization increases child prostitution. This has been well documented in the Netherlands since brothel prostitution was legalized. Pimps want to make money. They don’t care if someone is illegal, age 16, or whether she was trafficked. Pimps, organized criminals, and especially johns flock to wherever a thriving prostitution industry exists such as Las Vegas.</p>
<p>MYTH: When prostitution is legal it eliminates pimps by providing prostitutes with an occupational alternative.</p>	<p>FACT: Prostitution is about <i>not</i> having a range of educational and job options to choose from. Most women in prostitution end up there only because other options are not available. They do not have stable housing, they urgently need money to support children or pay for school, and they often have limited or no education. Prostitution is not labor, it is paid sexual exploitation. It is often paid rape. It is intrinsically harmful and traumatic.</p>

<p>MYTH: If prostitution is legalized it would promote the mental health of prostitutes because they feel ashamed and stigmatized by illegal prostitution.</p>	<p>FACT: It's not the legal status of prostitution that causes the harm, it's the prostitution itself. The longer she is in prostitution – legal or illegal - the more she is psychologically harmed. The shame and the isolation persist even if prostitution is decriminalized or legalized. Even though they'd be earning retirement benefits if they registered, women in Dutch prostitution don't register as legal prostitutes because they are ashamed to be known as prostitutes. Regardless of its legal status, women would prefer to get out of prostitution and usually feel ashamed of it. Does any woman in prostitution deserve to be treated disrespectfully or stigmatized? Of course not. But prostitution inevitably means that you're treated like an object to be masturbated into.</p>
<p>MYTH: Decriminalizing prostitution would save a lot of money because police wouldn't have to arrest prostitutes or johns or pimps.</p>	<p>FACT: Decriminalization of prostitution has resulted in expensive legal challenges because no one wants prostitution zoned into their neighborhood or near their kids' schools. Mustang Brothel was shut down because of tax evasion. Pimps are simply not going to hand over the massive profits that they make from the business of sexual exploitation.</p>
<p>MYTH: Prostitution is ugly, but we have to do something to make it a little better. Legalization is better than nothing at all.</p>	<p>FACT: Prostitution can't be made "a little better" anymore than domestic violence can be made "a little better." Women in prostitution tell us clearly: they want the same options in life that others have: a decent job, safe housing, medical care and psychological counseling. They deserve that, not just an HIV test to make sure that they are "clean meat" for johns or a union to ensure that they get an extra dollar or two for being paid to be sexually harassed, sexually exploited and often raped.</p>
<p>MYTH: Legal prostitution is a progressive solution to an age-old problem.</p>	<p>FACT: A progressive law promotes women's equality, not women's prostitution. The Netherlands and Germany are considering repealing legal prostitution because of the crime, trafficking, and sexual violence in both legal and illegal prostitution. A 1999 Swedish law describes prostitution as a human rights violation against women. Understanding the massive social and legal power difference in the prostitution transaction, Sweden arrests johns but not the women in prostitution. Trafficking and prostitution have plummeted in Sweden since the law was introduced. If <i>you</i> don't want to get paid for having sex with 5-10 smelly strangers a day that pimps send your way, why do you think anyone else does? Women in prostitution do not want to be in the brothels: 81% of the women in the Nevada legal brothels urgently want to escape prostitution.</p>