

State of Rhode Island: Governor Donald L. Carcieri

Governor Donald L. Carcieri Signs Legislation Closing Legalized Indoor Prostitution Loophole

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Governor Donald L. Carcieri today joined Rhode Island Attorney General Patrick Lynch, State Police Colonel Brendan Doherty, Representative Joanne Giannini, and Senator Paul V. Jabour at a bill signing ceremony to sign into law H 5044/S 0596, which ends legalized indoor prostitution in Rhode Island.



"Today we are signing an important piece of legislation that finally closes the loophole and makes prostitution illegal, no matter where it occurs," said Governor Donald L. Carcieri. "For too long, Rhode Island has had the terrible distinction of being the only state in the nation in which indoor prostitution was not considered a crime. Due to the leadership, hard work and dedication of so many of us in this room today, especially Representative Giannini and Senator Jabour, we have strengthened our laws, protected our most vulnerable residents, and enhanced the quality of life in our state."

H 5044/S 0596 defines commercial sexual activity and prohibits it at any location, creates punishments for individuals who attempt to procure the services of a prostitute, and expands the definition of pandering to include individuals that permit prostitution on their property and benefit from such criminal activity.

"For far too long, Rhode Island's indoor-prostitution loophole has put our state in the national limelight for all the wrong reasons. There should never have been a differentiation between indoor and outdoor prostitution; both acts should always have been considered criminal," said Attorney General Patrick C. Lynch. "With today's enactment of a bill that could not possibly have been vetted any more closely, however, Rhode Island has taken a strong and purposeful step toward improving our quality of life and cleaning up our image. I would like to thank the General Assembly for including the Attorney General's Office in this important public-policy discussion and I would like to thank Governor Carcieri for signing this essential bill into law."

"The signing of this legislation sends a succinct message to any group, who thinks they could use Rhode Island in furtherance of their illicit business," said Colonel Brendan Doherty, Superintendent of the Rhode Island State Police. "The exploitation of young women, who may have been lured into this culture as a result of a 'loophole,' will end. The bottom line is that commercial sex is now clearly illegal, and any of its operatives, johns and prostitutes alike, need to find another source of income or face arrest and prosecution."

"Enacting this legislation means that police will no longer be powerless against prostitution," said Representative Joanne Giannini (D-Dist. 7, Providence). "It means that we will no longer lay out the welcome mat for prostitutes, pimps and johns everywhere. Our sex industry will cease to be an unfortunate draw for the criminal-minded from inside and outside our state."

"The goals here were to go after those who have the power in this industry – the pimps, the traffickers and those who partner with them, and to help those who are victims," said Senator Paul V. Jabour (D-Dist. 5, Providence). "Under this bill, the victims will have incentive to cooperate with police and identify those who have forced them into the industry, and the police will be able to shut down the power players. Police intervention will help many women escape lives of slavery, danger and fear. At the same time, it will allow police the latitude to pursue charges against those who freely choose to participate in the criminal act of prostitution, whether as a direct participant or as someone who facilitates the crime."

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