

What would happen if Proposition K were passed in San Francisco?

Decriminalization of prostitution means that all laws regarding prostitution would be removed. In other words, buying a woman would be socially and legally equivalent to buying cigarettes. Prostitution in all its forms- street, brothel, escort, massage- would be legally welcomed. Pimps the world over would become San Francisco's new businessmen.

Decriminalization of prostitution will increase legal, illegal, semi-legal and all prostitution. Yet decriminalization will make no difference in the physical and the emotional safety of women in prostitution. Regardless of its legal status, prostitution is extremely harmful to those in it.

There is little difference *for the prostitute* between legalized and decriminalized prostitution. They are both state-sponsored prostitution. In legal prostitution, the state is the pimp, collecting taxes. In decriminalized prostitution, the pimps remain in control, whether they are bar pimps, stripclub pimps, taxi driver pimps, or street pimps. In both legalized and decriminalized prostitution, the john is welcomed as legitimate consumer.

Decriminalization of pimping and buying of women is in effect the promotion of and profiting from childhood sexual abuse, rape and sex trafficking. There is no way of making prostitution "a little bit better" any more than it is possible to make slavery "a little bit better." Prostitution is a profoundly harmful institution. Who does it harm the most? The woman or man or child who is prostituting is hurt the worst. She is hurt psychologically as well as physically. There is a much evidence for this.

What is a progressive response to prostitution?

Proposition K promotes the sex industry under the cynical guise of helping women avoid the stigma of arrest. The real beneficiaries of this ballot initiative are johns, pimps, and traffickers. Should we arrest women in prostitution? No. Almost all women in prostitution are there as a last resort, they don't "choose" the paid rapes of prostitution the way someone chooses a career as an x-ray technician.

95% of those in prostitution urgently want to escape it. Let's offer women and men and children in prostitution real choices. They tell us that they need stable housing, social services, medical treatment, and job training. That's what they should receive – not decriminalization. Should we arrest the pimps, johns, procurers and traffickers who use women in prostitution and profit from selling them? Yes. These are the perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse who should be arrested, not the women themselves.

Will decriminalization of prostitution stop illegal prostitution?

Decriminalization of prostitution in Australia and New Zealand has resulted in an increase in illegal, hidden, and street prostitution. Decriminalization facilitates sex trafficking.

Will decriminalization decrease the abuse of underage or trafficked women?

No. On the contrary, decriminalization increases child prostitution. This has been documented in the Netherlands and Australia. Pimps – owners of brothels, escort agencies, and massage parlors – want to make money. They don't care if someone is illegal, a child, or trafficked. Pimps, traffickers, procurers and especially johns flock to wherever a thriving prostitution industry exists.

Does decriminalization of prostitution eliminate pimps?

No, this argument is based on the assumption that prostitution is labor. Prostitution is not labor, it is a violation of human rights. It is often paid rape. It is intrinsically harmful and traumatic. For almost everyone in it, prostitution is about not having any other educational and job options to choose from. Most women in prostitution end up there as a last-ditch survival maneuver. 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.

Imagine this scenario: Vocational Rehab counselors recommending that women learn how to prostitute as a way of supporting themselves. That occurred in New Zealand where prostitution was decriminalized. In Germany, a woman who applied for welfare benefits was told to apply for work in a legal brothel first.

If prostitution were decriminalized would it promote the mental health of prostitutes because when it's illegal, they feel isolated and ashamed?

It's not the legal status of prostitution that causes the harm, it's the prostitution itself. The longer a person is in prostitution – legal or illegal - the more they are psychologically harmed. The shame and the isolation persist even if prostitution is decriminalized or legalized. Women in Dutch prostitution don't register as legal prostitutes because they are ashamed to be known as prostitutes – even though they'd be accruing retirement benefits if they registered.

Regardless of its legal status, women don't want to be prostitutes and are 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.

Would decriminalization make prostitutes safer from rape and physical assaults?

Women can report rapes and assaults to the police under current laws. The problem is that the contempt and misogyny toward prostitutes stays the same, whether prostitution is legal or illegal. Women get raped in escort and brothel prostitution almost as often as in street prostitution, according to a number of studies. Almost everyone in prostitution was raped as a child before she got into it. Incest and rape are boot camp for prostitution.

Won't decriminalizing prostitution save a lot of money because police wouldn't have to arrest anyone?

Decriminalization has resulted in expensive legal challenges because no one wants prostitution zoned into their neighborhood or near their kids' schools. Mustang Ranch (NV) was shut down

because of tax evasion. Pimps are simply not going to hand over the massive profits that are a part of the sex industry. Amsterdam is currently in the process of closing down its legal brothels because the city couldn't control the organized criminals who are attracted to legal or decriminalized prostitution.