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Could prostitution become legal in California?

By DAVID MARKLAND

Updated 2:02 PM PDT, Wed, Oct 22, 2008

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On November 4th, San Francisco will decide if they should stop enforcing laws against prostitution. While it doesn't legalize the world's oldest profession - [state law specifically prohibits prostitution](#) - it would keep prostitutes, johns, and pimps from fear of arrest or prosecution for partaking in related activity.

[Measure K: Changing the Enforcement of Laws Related to Prostitution and Sex Workers City of San Francisco](#), as it will appear on the ballot reads:

Shall the City: stop enforcing laws against prostitution; stop funding or supporting the First Offender Prostitution Program or any similar anti-prostitution program; enforce existing criminal laws that prohibit crimes such as battery, extortion and rape, regardless of the victim's status as a sex worker; and fully disclose the investigation and prosecution of violent crimes against sex workers?

[Among the measure's more high profile supporters](#) are the San Francisco Democratic Party, the San Francisco Bay Guardian, State Senator Carole Migden, and Jeffrey Klausner, director of STD control and prevention for the San Francisco's health department.

Opponents include the San Francisco Chronicle, Mayor Gavin Newsom, and the Coalition for SF Neighborhoods,

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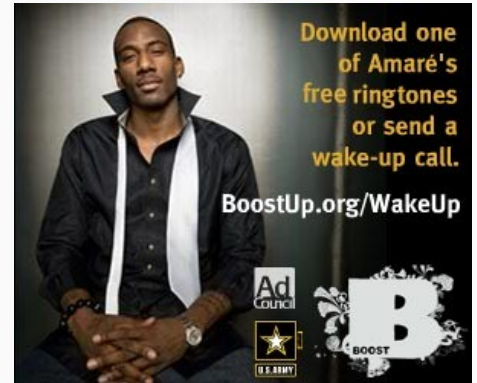
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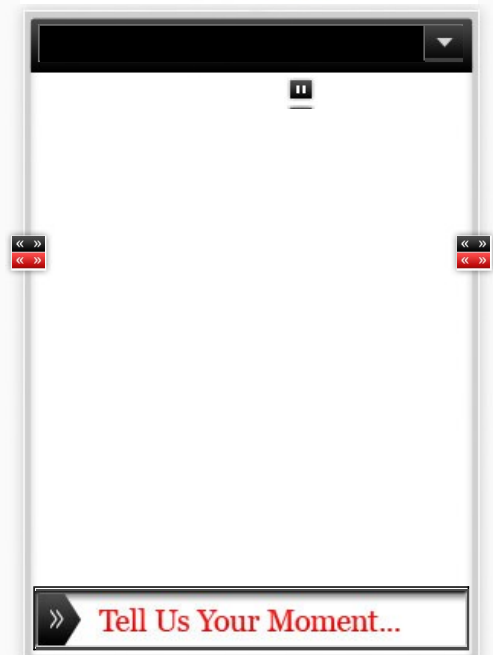
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One argument against Measure K is that it would legalize child prostitution, which may be an issue of semantics: in late December, Gov. Schwarzenegger decriminalized minors involved in the sex trade, and would treat them as victims - instead of charges and prison time, underage prostitutes would be connected with counselors and other services.

While Measure K would make California only the third state with lax prostitution laws, besides Nevada and Rhode Island, there is no indication its influence will reach beyond the Bay Area, let alone to Southern California. [From the LA Times:](#)

No proposal along the lines of Proposition K is on the horizon for Los Angeles.

“I think L.A. is many years behind San Francisco in terms of sexual politics, sexual rights,” said Mariko Passion, founder of the Sex Workers Outreach Project Los Angeles. “To have an opinion about what sex worker rights really mean, the awareness is not there at all.”

Correction: An original draft of this entry mistakenly listed and Jeffrey Klausner as being an opponent of Measure K.

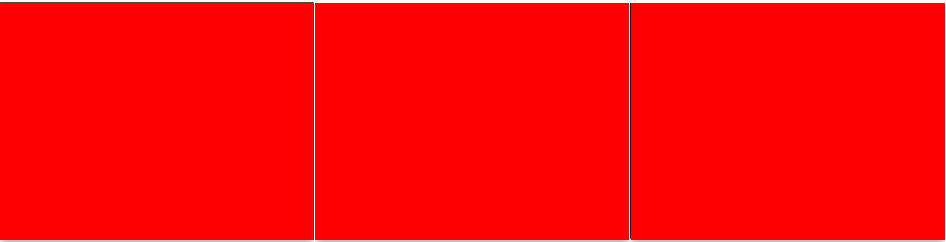
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