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Governor Carcieri Calls for Passage of Prostitution Bill

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Governor Carcieri Calls for Passage of Prostitution Bill (H 5044A) and Trafficking Bill (H 5661A)

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On Thursday (June 18, 2009), Governor Carcieri held a press conference to support Giannini's prostitution bill (H 5044A) and her House trafficking bill (H 5661A). Giannini's bill will create laws against prostitution to "close the loophole" as it is often referred to. Joining the governor were Representative Joanne Giannini, the sponsor of the bills, Stacey Pires Veroni, Assistant Attorney General, Col. Doherty, Superintendent of the Rhode Island State Police, Representative Roberto DaSilva, and Donna M. Hughes, Professor at the University of Rhode Island.

As a result of a law suit 30 years ago, the Rhode Island Assembly removed the laws criminalizing the buying and selling of sex as long as it occurred indoors. This lack of law has allowed the sex industry to grow rapidly in the last few years. According to research by Melanie Shapiro, ten Asian spa-brothels have opened since January of this year, bringing the number of known venues for prostitution to 30 in Providence alone. There are many other establishments where prostitution occurs that are underground.

Governor Carcieri said: "Indoor prostitution is illegal in every other state throughout the nation except Rhode Island and in certain counties in Nevada. That's a distinction that is detrimental to our state's image, and it hurts neighborhoods and business districts. ... We must take the necessary steps to better protect women and ensure that they are not exploited.

The Governor also urged the passage of legislation to put an end to the human trafficking industry in Rhode Island. Stating that, "While closing the loophole that has allowed indoor prostitution to flourish in Rhode Island will give law enforcement the tools to cripple the brothels and so-called "spas" and, thus, reduce the incidence of human trafficking, more needs to be done legislatively in the state to combat this."

Representative Giannini described her bill and said that she does not want Rhode Island to be a safe haven for the sex industry.

Col. Doherty opened his remarks by voicing his opposition to the Senate version of the human trafficking bill (S 0506). He criticized the Rhode Island Coalition Against Human Trafficking (RICAHT) by saying: Tammy Dudman came to me earlier this year and said she was working on a

trafficking bill. I supported her and the bill she said she was working on. Then she went and worked with other groups and added things to the bill that would be detrimental to law enforcement. Now, I definitely oppose the Senate version of the trafficking bill. He said he supports the House version of the trafficking bill (H5661A) that has passed the House by a large majority. Col Doherty also said that he supports the House version of the prostitution bill (H 5044A).

Freshman Representative and Pawtucket police officer Lt. Roberto DaSilva spoke personally and compellingly about the problem of prostitution. He was previously in charge of the Youth Services Bureau for four years where he investigated crimes involving persons under age 18. He said there is now more juvenile prostitution that he has ever seen before.

I spoke about the research Melanie Shapiro and I have done on the expanding sex industry in Rhode Island. One reporter asked if legalized prostitution in the Netherlands might be a good model for Rhode Island. I responded by explaining that the Netherlands, particularly Amsterdam, is aggressively reversing its course. They found that legalization did not break the control that organized crime has over the industry and many of the windows and brothels were staffed with women trafficked from Eastern Europe and Africa. Their ten year social experiment has failed. To date, almost half of the prostitute windows have been closed by the city and turned into shops and restaurants.

There were other supporters in the audience including George Kelley, President of the Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association, Steven McCartney, Chief of Police in Warwick, Father Healey from the Providence Roman Catholic Diocese, Donna Landry from the American Baptist Women, Pastors Stuart McCoy and Brian Estrella the Evangelical Covenant Church of Riverside, and Felicia Delgado of Project RENEW in Pawtucket.

I will send out copies of speakers' remarks.

(Although a *Providence Journal* reporter was at the press conference, the *Journal* did not run a story about the press conference in the paper.)

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