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## **Advocates Demand a Real Prostitution Solution**

### ***Aim to Get Teen Girls off the Streets and Increase Sex-Trafficking Prosecutions***

New York, NY-With Eliot Spitzer on the chopping block, the public may be awakening to the ubiquity of prostitution in the U.S., but advocates working for the protections of teenage girls pulled into the world of prostitution and fighting for tougher penalties on the johns that drive the industry from the demand side are already familiar with the rampant exploitation of women and girls nation and worldwide.

NOW-NYC was at the forefront of attaining the passage of New York State's first anti-human trafficking law. The organization has also been working to make it harder for traffickers to operate without impunity in the city. NOW-NYC has convinced fifteen publications to drop the sex ads that promote the gamut of prostitution services: from supposed "high-end" operations like the now infamous VIP Emperor's Club, to backroom brothels in Queens and Manhattan. These ads represent the business of selling women and girls for profit, and all it takes is a quick look at the pages of your local community newspaper. Many of them advertise openly in local publications. The Manhattan Verizon Yellow Pages charges up to \$45,000 for a full-page escort ad, adding hefty profits to its bottom line. Some of the ads picture girls as young as 10 years old.

President Sonia Ossorio asks, "What does it say about us as a society when the when the best career option for a single mother or a struggling actor is to exchange her body for money?" While we all have the image of the jet-setting prostitute set in our minds it's time to take a look at the real statistics. The average age of entry into prostitution is only 14 years old. And the women and girls who work as prostitutes overwhelmingly suffer from violence, drug abuse, childhood sex abuse, and post-traumatic stress. Indeed, it is one of the most dangerous jobs and has the highest on-the-job homicide rate of any other "occupation" for women.

And advocates know that where prostitution goes unchecked, sex trafficking runs rampant. As a critical part of NOW-NYC's campaign to End the Business of Human Trafficking in New York City, President Sonia Ossorio has investigated the underground world of prostitution and trafficking first-hand. She has seen the one-day houses set up where women and even girls "work" with a timer next to them on the nightstand in such assembly-line style sex that the condoms used are unwrapped ahead of time. She has worked with and on behalf of trafficking victims who were initiated into their new "job" with rape, one survivor being forced to service 19 men their first night in NYC. And she has met with many young girls who are struggling to find the support they need to get out of the life, those who are not even old enough to legally consent to sex but who are arrested and charged with prostitution, frighteningly forced to serve time behind bars.

As long as the abuse and exploitation of women and girls continues, advocates will be working to end it, whether or not there is high-profile scandal-breaking news.

The National Organization for Women is the nation's largest organization working to advance women's rights and improve women's lives. The New York City Chapter of NOW, founded in 1966, is the largest chapter in the country with 7,000 members locally and 35,000 statewide. NOW-NYC works to protect women's reproductive choices, end violence against women and eliminate sex discrimination in our schools, workplaces, and the justice system in New York.

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