

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 3.23.2018**

**Contact:** Maxine Doogan

415-265-3302, [info@esplerp.org](mailto:info@esplerp.org)



## **SESTA/FOSTA Passage Endangering Lives of Sex Workers**

*Sex Workers Fear For Safety As Social Spaces, Advertising Platforms Shutter  
Decriminalization Needed More Than Ever*

SAN FRANCISCO — Today, the Erotic Service Providers Legal, Education and Research Project (ESPLERP) issued the following statement on the disastrous and dangerous SESTA/FOSTA legislation passed in Congress this week:

The widespread anti-sex work crackdown that we predicted under SESTA/FOSTA has begun, and the bill hasn't even been signed into law.

Within hours of the passage of SESTA/FOSTA, sex workers saw the closure of several important networks that provide support and sustenance: subreddits where we communicate were the first to go; followed soon after by the closure of CityVibe, an important advertising platform used to meet clients safely; followed by the closure of the Craigslist Personals section. None of these spaces had been accused of facilitating sex trafficking. However the risk of potential liability under SESTA/FOSTA meant that these corporations are now unwilling to take the risk of allowing even what we believe to be constitutionally protected sex work a safe space or a voice.

FOSTA, passed by the US Senate in a 97-2 vote on Wednesday, does not differentiate between consensual sex work and sex trafficking, which means that any website that could potentially be used for consensual sex work, from webcams to dating sites and social networks, will begin censoring and banning even legal forms of sex work. The results will be disastrous for the health, safety, and rights of sex workers everywhere. Not only is our livelihood at risk, but workers will be pushed from relatively safe online spaces, where clients can be vetted and preventive information exchanged, to more dangerous street work — spaces where they will be, paradoxically, more at risk for trafficking.

While SESTA/FOSTA await the signature of the President to be signed into law, We cannot stress enough, that it is more important than ever that sex work be

decriminalized. Our recent lawsuit, ESPLERP v Gascon [case #16-15927], seeks establish a right to sexual privacy - whereby consenting adults can enter into private arrangements, which may involve payment, without fear of prosecution. That would allow sex workers who face harassment, assault, theft, trafficking, or other crimes to get the same justice as any other worker. It would also stop law enforcement arresting consensual sex workers and our clients. And decriminalization would help all workers more freely exchange information and resources, which can literally mean the difference between life and death.

While FOSTA and its companion house bill known as SESTA, was being considered, we screamed that the passage would endanger us. We screamed that it conflated consensual sex work with trafficking. We screamed that it would even shut down spaces unrelated to sex work. We were told we were hysterical, or unreasonable, or didn't know what we were talking about. How we wish that were the case. Our workers are now panicking, worried about their food, rent, and physical safety and they shouldn't be.

Sex workers will die because of this bill. The politicians that campaigned for this bill, the celebrities who stumped for it, and the corporations like Reddit who acquiesced in silencing our workers have blood on their hands. If they are serious about fighting sex trafficking, we call on them to support our fight to decriminalize sex work.

*The Erotic Service Providers Legal, Education and Research Project (ESPLERP) is a diverse community-based coalition advancing sexual privacy rights through litigation, education, and research. Contributions to support the court case can be submitted through our crowd fundraiser - [www.litigatetoemancipate.com](http://www.litigatetoemancipate.com).*

Erotic Service Providers Legal, Education and Research Project (ESPLERP)  
2261 Market St. #548 San Francisco, CA 94114  
eslerp.org, decriminalizesexwork.com

###