Press Release: National Organization for Women and Florida National Organization for Women Disavow Anti-Sex Worker Flyers

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NOW and Florida NOW Chapter Disavow Anti-Sex Worker Flyers Distributed at State Convention, Apologize for "Harm" and "Hostile Confrontations"

SWOP Behind Bars and ESPLER Project welcome the acknowledgment and call on NOW to finish the job: name what happened, publish the investigation's findings, and set a deadline.

ORLANDO, FL **-** The National Organization for Women and Florida NOW issued a joint letter on October 15, 2026, disavowing flyers distributed at the Florida NOW convention in August 2026 – several of which carried NOW's logo – that promoted criminalizing the purchase of sex. The flyers described sex work as inherently violent, and were distributed alongside a packet that accused sex worker rights organizations – SWOP among them – of being front groups for sex industry owners. The October 15th letter states that the materials were not approved by either organization, that their distributors were not authorized to use NOW's logo, and that the handouts violated Florida NOW's own published operating rules.

The letter goes further than a disclaimer. Signed by NOW President Kim Villanueva and Florida NOW President Julie A. Kent, it apologizes for the harm the flyers caused. Acknowledging the "aggressive and hostile statements" by the people distributing them, the letter acknowledges that those same individuals confronted conference attendees. The letter further concedes that NOW was not prepared to protect the people who were accosted.

It also says this: sex workers belong in feminist spaces.

"That sentence matters, and we don't take it for granted," said Alex Andrews of Sex Worker Outreach Project (SWOP) Behind Bars. "For decades, sex workers have been told we are the problem feminism exists to solve. Seeing NOW's president put her name to the opposite is not nothing. But a letter is a starting point. It is not a remedy."

What the letter doesn't say

The letter wasn't released for two months. It names no one. It does not describe what the flyers said, who produced them, or who distributed them. It describes the confrontations as "reported" and still "under investigation" – with no timeline and no commitment to make the findings public.

"An apology for harm that won't describe the harm is an apology with the evidence removed," said Maxine Doogan of Erotice Service Providers Legal, Education and Research Project. "People were treated with hostility at a feminist convention for being sex workers or for standing with us. They deserve to know what NOW found, and what happens to the people responsible."

The letter also frames the underlying conflict as a matter of "policy disagreements." SWOP Behind Bars and ESPLER Project note that the policy in question – criminalization – is not an abstract debate for the people living under it. Criminalization determines who gets arrested, who loses housing, who can screen a client, and who can call for help without being charged. Historically, NOW has published policies supporting the removal of criminalization for prostitution.

Our asks

SWOP Behind Bars and ESPLER Project call on the national NOW organization and the Florida NOW Chapter to:

1. **Publish the findings** of the investigation into the August confrontations – on a stated timeline.
2. **Identify the responsible parties,** or explain why they will not, and outline what consequences will follow for these parties under NOW's and Florida NOW's rules.
3. **Adopt and publish an enforceable conduct and materials policy** for all NOW conventions and chapter events, including real-time response protocols.
4. **Bring sex workers into the room,** not as a topic, but as participants, in drafting those policies and in NOW's ongoing deliberations on the decriminalization of sex work.

"NOW says it wants a more welcoming space," said Andrews. "We'll help build it. Start by telling the truth about what happened in August."

Copies of NOW's letter, the offending fliers, and NOW's resolutions can be made available to members of the media.

About SWOP Behind Bars

SWOP Behind Bars is a sex worker-led organization providing harm reduction, reentry support, and advocacy for sex workers and survivors affected by criminalization and incarceration. https://www.swopbehindbars.org

About ESPLER Project

The Erotic Service Providers Legal, Educational and Research Project is a diverse community-based erotic service provider led group that empowers the erotic community to advance sexual privacy rights for all. https://esplerp.org

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