

## Prostitution Advertising

In a recent column, Mike Thomas pointed out the legal quagmire of controlling prostitution advertising. To provide some history – in 1997, the Sprint and BellSouth Yellow Pages, as well as the Orlando Weekly and Orlando Post, agreed to stop the practice of advertising for local escort services. For years following this agreement, the community stayed relatively free from these organized criminal operations. Later, one weekly publication reneged on the agreement, and efforts were again made to seek good corporate citizenship and a return to the prior agreement to stop the obvious prostitution advertising. These efforts were rebuffed by the publication, which led to a last resort to solve the problem – grand jury indictments.

Although this may seem like a minor issue, the Metropolitan Bureau of Investigation's efforts to curtail advertising for prostitution remains a part of the overall problem-solving recipe to better our community. It is part of hundreds of decisions made by sheriffs and police chiefs, with a common goal—to maintain Central Florida's image as a clean and family oriented community. Regrettably, publications that derive millions of dollars from the prostitution trade care more about the money—not the community.

As in all prosecutions, we have come to the point of defense attorney spin, like the bizarre rationale that a 7-11 clerk selling a condom to a prostitute is equivalent to a corporation that potentially makes millions in prostitution advertising. Another outrageous spin suggested by defense counsel was that law enforcement should consider advertisements placed in ambiguous sections of publications to have the same adverse effect on the community as a widely read publication that has designed a specific category, such as Adult Services, which advertises illegal services.

At the root of the problem is a need for the corporation's business culture to no longer send the message to its employees that it is acceptable to earn commissions and profits for the corporation by printing advertising for illegal prostitution. By "Doing the Right Thing" and making the choice to not aid prostitution, a problem-solving settlement remains a viable option.

William Lutz