

REASON ROUNDUP

U.S. Sex Workers and 'Prurient' Businesses Excluded From COVID-19 Disaster Loans

Plus: U.S. movie theaters made only a little more than \$5,000 last week, COVID-19 cases in Florida surge, and more...

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(Wiktor Szymanowicz/ZUMA Press/Newscom)

Stock plans are eligible for funds, yet not adult entertainers. Sex workers and anyone whose professional activities involve "prurient" products or content are ineligible for COVID-19-related loans for small businesses and the self-employed.

"Whorephobia is literally written into this covid19 relief," [commented](#) Jacq the Stripper on Twitter. "In a global pandemic, policy makers are actively making the world a worse place for sex workers and their families."

On the Small Business Administration (SBA) [website](#), U.S. business owners employing fewer than 500 people, sole proprietors, and independent contractors "that are impacted by the Coronavirus" can now apply for the SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program. Small cooperatives, nonprofit organizations, and Employee Stock Ownership Plans are also eligible.

But SBA explicitly excludes a few categories of businesses and workers.

Some of these make sense: Applicants engaged in activity that's illegal under federal law are not eligible for assistance. Nor are certain agricultural enterprises, which are eligible for government funding in other forms. And members of Congress and state and local governments are also barred from SBA disaster-relief loans.

Yet some of the eligibility requirements reflect nothing more than prejudice, puritanism, and playing favorites. For instance, any entity that normally makes more than one-third of its gross annual revenue from legal gambling is excluded.

So is any applicant that presents "live performances of a prurient sexual nature," and anyone who "derive(s) directly or indirectly more than de minimis gross revenue through the sale of products or services, or the presentation of any depictions or displays, of a prurient sexual nature."

In this way, the government can make sure direct-service sex workers are still banned from COVID-19 relief loans, despite prostitution not being illegal under federal law.

They can also reject loan applications from independent workers in industries (like webcamming and porn) that are unquestionably legal across the country. And they can refuse loans to disfavored businesses, like strip clubs and sex toy shops, despite these perfectly legal businesses being forcibly shut down by state orders just the same as movie theaters, hair salons, and clothing boutiques have been.

"The goal of the assistance in the [CARES act](#) is to keep businesses intact," [notes](#) Forbes contributor Will Jeakle. "Another goal is to keep companies and their employees spending so that the structure of the economy can stay relatively stable for the snapback that should occur once the crisis is mitigated."

By denying disaster-relief loans to disfavored workers and businesses, however, authorities aren't merely trying to keep the "structure of the economy" relatively stable— they're seemingly designing a new, post-COVID-19 economy, without workers and businesses they don't like.

The only other condition barring someone from eligibility is being behind on child support payments. (Because, surely, being unemployed and banned from SBA loans will help put food in those kids' mouths! Oh, wait...)

The SBA disaster loan program is separate from the \$1,200 COVID-19 relief checks that Congress approved last week for all Americans under a certain income bracket.