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Sex, lies, and videotape: How politicians lost the War against Pornography

And why Libertarians say it's time to legalize the First Amendment

WASHINGTON, DC—Want to reduce pornography? Legalize it, says the Libertarian Party.

That's what several Western European countries have done, and demand for pornography has plummeted. The United States declared War on Pornography instead, and business is booming, according to a recent exposé on the sex industry by *U.S. News & World Report*. The provocative article, "The Business of Porn," has sparked a renewed debate over legalization.

"Legalizing sexually explicit material should be one way to satisfy every American," said Steve Dasbach, national chairman of the Libertarian Party. "Ironically, people who oppose pornography would get more of what they want — less pornography — without interfering with the rights of others.

"Of course, there are better reasons to repeal all laws against movies, books and magazines, starting with the First Amendment. In a free society, most adults are angered by the thought of politicians censoring their books and movies. It's not the government's job to play Siskel & Ebert with a gun."

The *U.S. News* investigation found that since the Meese Commission urged a crackdown in 1986, pornography has exploded into an \$8 billion-a-year industry, raking in more money than the total domestic box office receipts of all Hollywood films. The number of hard-core video rentals has increased 800%, and consumers now rent 665 million sex videos a year.

"The number of people watching these videos far outnumbers the politicians who are trying to censor them," Dasbach said. "If you compare the number of video rentals with the number of votes cast in last year's presidential election, explicit videos were more popular than Democratic and Republican politicians by a ratio of eight to one."

The frontal assault on the First Amendment continues under Bill Clinton, whose Justice Department has prosecuted dozens of First Amendment crimes, Dasbach noted.

Why does the War on Smut go on? Partly because of discredited accusations that pornography causes crime, Dasbach said. But, in fact, experts note that sex crimes fell 67% in Denmark and 11% in Germany after sexually explicit material was legalized.

"In America, the evidence is clear that millions of individuals regularly view this material without committing violent crimes," Dasbach said. "So what right do politicians have to impose censorship on them? It's time to end the War on the First Amendment, once and for all."

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