

# Illegal massage businesses on the rise in Calif.

By Jeremy B. White, Sacramento Bee

The sign wasn't the kind most businesses feel compelled to post.

"We Are Not A House Of Prostitution," proclaimed the notice that Assemblyman Jimmy Gomez, D-Los Angeles, recalled seeing in the window of a Los Feliz massage parlor.

To Gomez, the message illustrated how a perennial concern about massage businesses has intensified over the last few years. Cities and counties have witnessed a boom in massage establishments even as they have ceded some authority to regulate those businesses, heightening the risk of violators selling sex under the guise of massage therapy.

Lawmakers will soon have an opportunity to change how California regulates massages. A 2008 law replaced local control with a state nonprofit, the California Massage Therapy Council, that certifies massage practitioners, requires background checks and oversees massage schools. The law creating the new framework will expire at the end of 2014.

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