

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICIAL CODE

TITLE 22.
CRIMINAL OFFENSES AND PENALTIES.

CHAPTER 22.
OBSCENITY.

2001 Edition

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CHAPTER 22. OBSCENITY.

§ 22-2201. CERTAIN OBSCENE ACTIVITIES AND CONDUCT DECLARED UNLAWFUL; DEFINITIONS; PENALTIES; AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSES; EXCEPTION.

(a)(1) It shall be unlawful in the District of Columbia for a person knowingly:

(A) To sell, deliver, distribute, or provide, or offer or agree to sell, deliver, distribute, or provide any obscene, indecent, or filthy writing, picture, sound recording, or other article or representation;

(B) To present, direct, act in, or otherwise participate in the preparation or presentation of, any obscene, indecent, or filthy play, dance, motion picture, or other performance;

(C) To pose for, model for, print, record, compose, edit, write, publish, or otherwise participate in preparing for publication, exhibition, or sale, any obscene, indecent, or filthy writing, picture, sound recording, or other article or representation;

(D) To sell, deliver, distribute, or provide, or offer or agree to sell, deliver, distribute or provide any article, thing, or device which is intended for or represented as being for indecent or immoral use;

(E) To create, buy, procure, or possess any matter described in the preceding subparagraphs of this paragraph with intent to disseminate such matter in violation of this subsection;

(F) To advertise or otherwise promote the sale of any matter described in the preceding subparagraphs of this paragraph; or

(G) To advertise or otherwise promote the sale of material represented or held out by such person to be obscene.

(2)(A) For purposes of subparagraph (E) of paragraph (1) of this subsection, the creation, purchase, procurement, or possession of a mold, engraved plate, or other embodiment of obscenity specially adapted for reproducing multiple copies or the possession of more than 3 copies, of obscene, indecent, or filthy material shall be prima facie evidence of an intent to disseminate such material in violation of this subsection.

(B) For purposes of paragraph (1) of this subsection, the term "knowingly" means having general knowledge of, or reason to know, or a belief or ground for belief which warrants further inspection or inquiry of, the character and content of any article, thing, device, performance, or representation described in paragraph (1) of this subsection which is reasonably susceptible of examination.

(3) When any person is convicted of a violation of this subsection, the court in its judgment of conviction may, in addition to the penalty prescribed, order the confiscation and disposal of any materials described in paragraph (1) of this subsection, which were named in the charge against such person and which were found in the possession or under the control of such person at the time of such person's arrest.

(b)(1) It shall be unlawful in the District of Columbia for any person knowingly:

(A) To sell, deliver, distribute, or provide, or offer or agree to sell, deliver, distribute, or provide to a minor:

(i) Any picture, photograph, drawing, sculpture, motion picture film, or similar visual representation or image of a person or portion of the human body, which depicts nudity, sexual conduct, or sado-masochistic abuse and which taken as a whole is patently offensive because it affronts prevailing standards in the adult community as a whole with respect to what is suitable material for minors; or

(ii) Any book, magazine, or other printed matter however reproduced or sound recording, which depicts nudity, sexual conduct, or sado-masochistic abuse or which contains explicit and detailed verbal descriptions or narrative accounts of sexual excitement, sexual conduct, or sado-masochistic abuse and which taken as a whole is patently offensive because it affronts prevailing standards in the adult community as a whole with respect to what is suitable material for minors; or

(B) To exhibit to a minor, or to sell or provide to a minor an admission ticket to, or pass to, or to admit a minor to, premises whereon there is exhibited, a motion picture, show, or other presentation which, in whole or in part, depicts nudity, sexual conduct, or sado-masochistic abuse and which taken as a whole is patently offensive because it affronts prevailing standards in the adult community as a whole with respect to what is suitable material for minors.

(2) For purposes of paragraph (1) of this subsection:

(A) The term "minor" means any person under the age of 17 years.

(B) The term "nudity" includes the showing of the human male or female genitals, pubic area or buttocks with less than a full opaque covering, or the showing of the female breast with less than a full opaque covering of any portion thereof below the top of the nipple, or the depiction of covered male genitals in a discernibly turgid state.

(C) The term "sexual conduct" includes acts of sodomy, masturbation, homosexuality, sexual intercourse, or physical contact with a person's clothed or unclothed genitals, pubic area, buttocks, or, if such person be a female, breast.

(D) The term "sexual excitement" includes the condition of human male or female genitals when in a state of sexual stimulation or arousal.

(E) The term "sado-masochistic abuse" includes flagellation or torture by or upon a person clad in undergarments or a mask or bizarre costume, or the condition of being fettered, bound, or otherwise physically restrained on the part of one so clothed.

(F) The term "knowingly" means having a general knowledge of, or reason to know, or a belief or ground for belief which warrants further inspection or inquiry or both of:

(i) The character and content of any material described in paragraph (1) of this subsection which is reasonably susceptible of examination by the defendant; and

(ii) The age of the minor.

(c) It shall be an affirmative defense to a charge of violating subsection (a) or (b) of this section that the dissemination was to institutions or individuals having scientific, educational, or other special justification for possession of such material.

(d) Nothing in this section shall apply to a licensee under the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. § 151 et seq.) while engaged in activities regulated pursuant to such Act.

(e) A person convicted of violating subsection (a) or (b) of this section shall for the 1st offense be fined not more than \$1,000 or imprisoned not more than 180 days, or both. A person convicted of a 2nd or subsequent offense under subsection (a) or (b) of this section shall be fined not less than \$1,000 nor more than \$5,000 or imprisoned not less than 6 months or more than 3 years, or both.

(Mar. 3, 1901, 31 Stat. 1332, ch. 854, § 872; Dec. 27, 1967, 81 Stat. 738, Pub. L. 90-226, title VI, § 606; May 21, 1994, D.C. Law 10-119, § 2(p), 41 DCR 1639; Aug. 20, 1994, D.C. Law 10-151, § 105(m), 41 DCR 2608.)

HISTORICAL AND STATUTORY NOTES

Prior Codifications

1981 Ed., § 22-2001.

1973 Ed., § 22-2001.

Emergency Act Amendments

For temporary amendment of section, see § 105(m) of the Omnibus Criminal Justice Reform Emergency Amendment Act of 1994 (D.C. Act 10-255, June 22, 1994, 41 DCR 4286).

Legislative History of Laws

Law 10-119, the "Anti-Gender Discriminatory Language Criminal Offenses Amendment Act of 1994," was introduced in Council and assigned Bill No. 10-332, which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary. The Bill was adopted on first and second readings on February 1, 1994, and March 1, 1994, respectively. Signed by the Mayor on March 17, 1994, it was assigned Act No. 10-209 and transmitted to both Houses of Congress for its review. D.C. Law 10-119 became effective on May 21, 1994.

Law 10-151, the "Omnibus Criminal Justice Reform Amendment Act of 1994," was introduced in Council and assigned Bill No. 10-98, which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary. The Bill was adopted on first and second readings on March 29, 1994, and April 12, 1994, respectively. Signed by the Mayor on May 4, 1994, it was assigned Act No. 10-238 and transmitted to both Houses of Congress for its review. D.C. Law 10-151 became effective on August 20, 1994.

Delegation of Authority

Delegation of authority under D.C. Law 5-88, see Mayor's Order 85-28, March 11, 1985.

Miscellaneous Notes

Video arcade regulations amended: Section 2 of D.C. Law 5-88 amends the regulations governing video arcades and mechanical amusement machines which prohibit the use or display of machines displaying specified sexual activities or anatomical areas on premises open to persons under 18.