

Why Doesn't NARSOL just move the conference from Texas?

written by admin | September 9, 2021



We have received a number of inquires asking why we don't cancel the conference in Houston and move it somewhere else in another state. Due to the fact that several messages have been received, we feel it's important to respond. The consternation is due to a recent abortion restriction and other controversial laws that are now in effect in Texas. Since NARSOL is a non-partisan organization, our policy is that we refrain from taking a position on laws outside of our advocacy, which is criminal justice reform, and our focus, which is individuals and families harmed and marginalized by the sexual offense registry and sexual offense laws that are contrary to rehabilitation incentives.

It is impractical for us to move or cancel this event for a number of reasons. First, it is very difficult to find a venue that is affordable and also welcomes a group which is comprised of persons advocating for those on a sexual offense registry, a group which also includes those with a past sexual criminal conviction. Second, at this late date, it would be

almost impossible to secure an alternate location that would so well accommodate us. Third, the hotel would impose a penalty on NARSOL which would be 90 percent of projected room revenue plus the minimum food and beverage tab, which is \$5000.00. The combined amount we would owe would be more than \$22,000.00. NARSOL does not believe our donors would be thrilled if we were so cavalier as to nonchalantly throw away more than \$20,000.00 of their contributions.

NARSOL does not have the resources of the National Basketball Association (NBA) or the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) to be able to exert any significant influence on the state of Texas. We are aware that multiple Fortune 500 companies threatened to punish the state of Georgia when their legislature enacted a bathroom bill a few years ago. The pressure resulted in a veto of that bill by former governor Nathan Deal. A small organization such as NARSOL does not have anything approximating the leverage that the group of Fortune 500 companies brought to bear on the state of Georgia.

NARSOL believes it is important to focus on the positive attributes of our current venue. As with our first Houston conference in 2019, we have received [a letter from the mayor of Houston](#) welcoming us, along with positive comments about the work we do. He says that the city of Houston is “. . . welcoming and inclusive and supportive of efforts to reintegrate citizens who have paid their debts to society,” and he commends our “. . . restorative justice efforts on behalf of marginalized citizens.”

Additionally, the Marriott Hotel has been very gracious and accommodating to NARSOL, despite knowing the constituency we serve. They are undertaking some public relations risks by permitting us to use their venue for our conference. We have found that hotels that are as welcoming to us are few and far between.

While Texas may be seen as a state hostile to our advocacy, NARSOL's first and one of our very strongest affiliated organizations, Texas Voices, is here. The advantages to having a conference in a state with a strong, active affiliate are too many to enumerate.

The most important reason for us to continue with the event is that we do not support the concept of collective punishment. It is not fair or reasonable to hold the entire state of Texas responsible for a law that by all accounts is not supported by the majority of the state's residents. Most of the employees whose jobs involve serving us probably are as disappointed as anyone else that this decision made by a few is causing so much adverse publicity to them as well as threatening their livelihoods. They too have families who they are trying to support, and to punish them for something that is not of their doing is not consistent with NARSOL's values.

Registration numbers for the conference are very strong. In fact, this may be a record setting attendance for us, despite the pandemic and concerns about the virus. NARSOL hopes that you will take everything into consideration and [join us in Houston October 8-10.](#)