The following is a compendium of news reports over the last month that may be of interest to our AG offices who are dealing with human trafficking issues. Neither the National Association of Attorneys General nor the National Attorneys General Training & Research Institute expresses a view as to the accuracy of news accounts nor as to the position expounded by the authors of the hyperlinked articles.

March 2014

News from AG Offices

**Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt** announced the awarding of nearly $70,000 in grants to five Kansas groups. The money will be used to aid human trafficking victims in Lawrence, Kansas City, Topeka, and Wichita. Since the legislature passed new laws cracking down on human trafficking in 2013, 200 victims have been identified for services by the organizations.

**Massachusetts Attorney General Martha Coakley** announced the conviction last month of a Massachusetts man and his wife for human trafficking. Rafael Henriquez and Ramona Carpio Hernandez ran a sophisticated human trafficking operation that transported numerous women into the area and then housed them in deplorable conditions for a week at a time for the purpose of prostitution. Another man, Diego Suarez, was convicted on three counts of owning a sex trafficking home. He helped handle the daily operations of the organization, including supervising one of the primary locations where this activity took place in Chelsea. These convictions are the first made by the AG’s Office since the passage of the state human trafficking law and are believed to be the second set of convictions statewide. The AG’s Office currently has human trafficking charges pending against 11 other individuals in separate cases.

**Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette** announced last month the conviction of Jackie Robinson Harris on human trafficking and prostitution charges. He exploited a 16-year old girl from southeast Michigan by recruiting her to work as a prostitute. This is the eighth human trafficking conviction secured by Schuette’s Human Trafficking Unit since it was launched in 2011

State Legislative Activity

In **Arizona**, the legislature is considering **HB 2454** which incorporates recommendations from Gov. Jan Brewer’s task force, co-chaired by Cindy McCain. The bill would provide an affirmative defense to a defendant charged with prostitution if the defendant committed the acts as a direct result of being a victim of sex trafficking. The bill also targets those who recruit victims from shelters serving runaways, foster children, homeless people and victims of domestic violence.
The Indiana legislature has passed **SB 291** which specifies that Indiana’s attorney general has the same authority as a law enforcement agency to access and maintain information regarding violations of the human trafficking statute. It also permits the Attorney General’s Office to assist with the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking violations. The bill awaits the Governor’s signature.

The **Oklahoma** legislature is considering **HB 2349**, which requires the immediate reporting to the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Control of any suspected incident of child sex trafficking.

The **Virginia** legislature has passed two human trafficking bills. **HB 235** orders that those convicted of soliciting an underage prostitute be placed on Virginia’s online sex offender registry. **HB 660** enables prosecutors to file for the forfeiture of money and other assets that can be traced to the profits of prostitution and human trafficking. Both bills await the Governor’s signature.

The Wisconsin Assembly has passed **AB 620** which would tighten Wisconsin’s human trafficking laws and give victims a way to void any crimes they may have committed. A companion bill, **SB 492**, is before the Wisconsin Senate.

**State Investigations/Arrests**

**Long Beach, California**, police have arrested Edward Watson of Compton on charges of human sex trafficking. An investigation began when officers responded to a call of a male chasing a female with a hammer. An adult female victim told officers that Watson had befriended her six months prior, treated her as a girlfriend, and then forced her into prostitution against her will while verbally and physically abusing her.

**Denver, Colorado**, law enforcement officials announced the arrest of Joshua Billingslea and Diana Billingslea on five counts of human trafficking, one count of pimping, one count of prostitution, and one count of pandering. They are accused of running a prostitution business out of their massage parlor.

A 33-year old **Boston, Massachusetts**, man has been charged under the state’s human trafficking laws for allegedly forcing a teenage girl into prostitution. Prosecutors allege that Tyrone Battle met the runaway girl three years ago when she was 14, took her home, raped her, and forced her into prostitution. Battle is being held on $75,000 bond.

**Camden, New Jersey**, police arrested two individuals on charges of human trafficking. The couple is alleged to have purchased a bus ticket to transport a 26-year old from North Carolina to engage in prostitution in New Jersey.

A **Morris County, New Jersey**, grand jury returned an indictment against a 22-year old man for first-degree human trafficking. Wendy Archelus is accused of recruiting a teenage girl to work as a prostitute for him.

**Paramus, New Jersey**, officials arrested Miguel Hernandez of New Rochelle, New Jersey, charging him with human trafficking, promoting prostitution, endangering the welfare of a child and various drug
offenses. A Paramus police officer saw a teenaged passenger in Hernandez’ car and, concerned for her safety, contacted Paramus detectives. An investigation revealed that Hernandez posted photos of the girl, offering her for sex, instructed her how much to charge and the acts she was to perform, and drove the girl to various locations in New Jersey to meet clients.

State law enforcement officials arrested a Passaic, New Jersey, couple with human trafficking in connection with their alleged employment of a 16-year-old girl at a city massage parlor. At the parlor, she allegedly had sex for pay with clients booked by the couple.

A statewide crackdown on human trafficking led to the arrest of seven in Salem County, New Jersey. A joint task force operation with detectives from the Salem County prosecutor’s office and agents from the FBI Philadelphia Office conducted a sting at several area hotels. Three people were charged with prostitution, two were charged with promoting prostitution, and others face drug charges.

Athens, Ohio, Judge L. Alan Goldsberry rejected defense arguments that Aileen Mays, charged with human trafficking and compelling prostitution along with other offenses, should be released on her own recognizance. Instead, he reduced the bond from $350,000 to $200,000. The alleged victim was 16 years old at the time of Mays’ arrest.

Jackson, Wyoming, officials arrested Marco Rosales Espinosa on charges of labor trafficking. Prosecutors allege that Espinosa would contact illegal laborers, forced them to work for him in his drywall business by threatening deportation, and then pocketed their paychecks.

State Prosecutions and Convictions

A Suffolk County, Massachusetts, jury found Tyshaun McGhee and Sidney McGee guilty on three counts each of trafficking a person for sexual servitude. The victims, 24 and 28 at the time of the crimes, told jurors that they were approached by one or both men, plied them with drugs, and then coerced them into prostitution with men who responded to online advertisements. The victims escaped from the defendants’ vehicle and ran to Boston Medical Center where they disclosed the abuse. McGhee was sentenced to 10 to 15 years in prison and McGee was sentenced to 10 to 12 years.

Articles of General Interest

An article in the Bismarck Tribune noted that, in North Dakota, law enforcement and public safety officials have been concerned about human trafficking, but decry the lack of statistics regarding the extent of the problem. North Dakota, and particularly western North Dakota with its oil boom, has become a target for organized crime, according to U.S. Attorney Tim Purdon. Prostitution arrests have increased and, where there is prostitution, there is almost always human trafficking.

The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation released an updated, more detailed human trafficking study following up on a study previously released in 2011. Eighty-one percent of jurisdictions reporting said they had no cases of human sex trafficking. However, several counties reported a high number of cases, including Coffee County which dealt with over 100 cases.