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.

News from Attorney General Offices

Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi has announced a statewide initiative to raise awareness about human trafficking and to help parents protect their children from online sex traffickers. Posted on the AG’s website is a tip sheet for parents about online safety. Billboards, bus shelters, and mall displays will carry posters about the initiative.

Georgia Attorney General Sam Olens has been instrumental in advocating for stronger human trafficking laws in Georgia. One of these, HB 141, imposes a fine up to $5,000 for business that fail to inform victims of a 24-hour, toll-free hotline they can use to call for help. The signs have now begun to appear in bars, airports, and hospitals across Georgia.

Louisiana Attorney General Buddy Caldwell announced the arrest of John Wayne Garon for child sex trafficking. The arrest was a result of a joint investigation involving the Attorney General’s High Technology Crime and Fugitive Apprehension Unit and local, state, and federal law enforcement.

Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott announced that his office has produced a human trafficking prevention manual for criminal justice professionals. The resource provides information on how to recognize victims and help them receive critical services. It also provides human trafficking scenarios that law enforcement may encounter.

Wisconsin Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen has released a report, titled “A Baseline Assessment of Human Trafficking in the State of Wisconsin.” The report notes that both labor and sex trafficking occur in the state. Most reported cases have occurred in more highly populated parts of Wisconsin and in significant tourist areas.

Legislative Activities

A task force, convened by Governor Jan Brewer in Arizona, has completed it study of state laws to combat human trafficking. Recommendations include lowering the standard of proof required for buyers of children for sexual purposes and for an education campaign to address demand. Cindy McCain, wife of Senator McCain, co-chaired the task force which was put together in advance of Arizona’s hosting the Super Bowl in 2015.
In Kansas, a newly-enacted human trafficking law, Senate Sub. HB 2034, establishes the crime of commercial sexual exploitation of a child. Under this law, a minor under age 18 is considered a victim of abuse and can be treated at a secure facility with trauma services. The law broadly defines trafficking, enhances incarceration penalties and fines for traffickers and johns, establishes john schools, and imposes lifetime post-release supervision and lifetime sex offender registration for sex trafficking minors. The law also provides enhanced tools for law enforcement, asset forfeiture, restitution, and an affirmative defense for victims of sex trafficking and establishes an official state advisory board and a victim assistance fund.

In Michigan, a 19-bill package will be introduced into the legislature next week addressing human trafficking. The proposed legislation would provide safe harbor for victims, eliminate the statute of limitations for trafficking offenses, allow victims to sue their captors, and enable a prosecutor to utilize wire tapping while building a criminal case. One of the bills would require individuals caught purchasing sex to register on the Michigan sex offender list.

**State Prosecutions, Investigations, and Arrests**

California prosecutors have dismissed a human trafficking case brought against a Saudi national. The case was initiated when a Kenyan woman reported to police that she escaped after having her passport taken and being forced to work long hours for meager pay. Investigators were unable to substantiate her allegations.

Two suspects have been arrested in a human trafficking case in Lake Charles, Louisiana. The arrest followed an investigation into reports of a missing 19-year old girl from Huntsville, Alabama. The victim was being advertised on a web page as being available for escort services.

A Baltimore County, Maryland, jury convicted an Ohio man, Bennie Veasey, of three counts of human trafficking. The victim, also from Ohio, was rescued as a result of an undercover operation. Veasey awaits sentencing.

A Ramsey County, Minnesota, judge sentenced two men, Fonati Diggs and Timothy Cross, to more than 21 years in prison for sex trafficking two young women in St. Paul. The girls were 17 and 18 years old.

A Fargo, North Dakota, man, Chad Lee Lindley, recently pled guilty to human trafficking. He is the first person in Cass County to be charged under North Dakota’s 2009 human trafficking law. He was sentenced to eight years’ imprisonment, with five years suspended. Fargo vice officers developed the case after monitoring online ads on Craigslist.

The Human Trafficking Unit of Oklahoma’s Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs concluded a four-day operation in mid-September, focused on organized prostitution operations in northeast Oklahoma. Three victims of human trafficking were found, including a 15-year old, and transported to a shelter. Police arrest 42 different individuals on a variety of charges.
Also in Oklahoma, Tulsa police have arrested Alyssa White on one count of human trafficking and one count of prostitution after an undercover investigation found a 15-year old who was being advertised on Backpage.

In the first human trafficking case prosecuted in Tarrant County, Texas, Ricky Davis was sentenced to two consecutive 99-year terms. The victim was a 12-year old girl whose family was a friend of Davis. He abducted her after attending church with the family, raped her, and took her to a bar, offering her for sex to the patrons.

**Other News of Interest**

Jonathan Lippman, the chief judge of New York’s highest appellate court, announced that the state is creating new specialized criminal courts to handle prostitution cases and provide services to help wrest sex trafficking victims from the cycle of exploitation and arrest. The new Human Trafficking Intervention Courts will handle all cases involving prostitution-related offenses that continue past arraignment. Defendants who agree will be referred to services such as drug treatment, shelter, immigration assistance, health care, education, and job training.

A new report, issued by the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council, affirms that commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors are serious problems in the United States. The report urges all jurisdictions to develop laws and policies that redirect young victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation under 18 away from arrest and prosecution and toward services that are equipped to meet their needs.