The following is a compendium of news reports over the last month that may be of interest to our AG offices that are dealing with state-focused 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.

August 2015

News from AG Offices

In connection with this year’s annual Brickyard 400 NASCAR race, Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller highlighted Indiana’s Not Buying It campaign which focuses on reducing demand for commercial sex and human trafficking. General Zoeller, along with two state representatives, distributed information and talked to business owners about human trafficking and how to recognize signs of the crime occurring.

Last month, Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healy called on Backpage to shut down its adult advertising section. She noted that nearly all the human trafficking cases her office has prosecuted involved advertisements listed on the Backpage website. On July 1, an escort, who was advertised on Backpage, was lured to the Extended Stay Hotel in Burlington where she was robbed and killed by two Boston men.

Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt announced that his office has obtained the first conviction on a human sex trafficking case. Mario Lamont Jones II, 25, of Las Vegas was sentenced to 36-120 months in state prison after pleading guilty to one count of sex trafficking.

Rhode Island Attorney General Peter Kilmartin announced that a Providence County Superior Court jury found Troy Footman, 53, of Boston, guilty on two counts of sex trafficking a minor, two counts of pandering, and one count of operating a motor vehicle on a suspended license. Footman faces up to 91 years in prison. The victim, a 14-year old runaway, was befriended by Footman with whom she developed a sexual relationship. He procured a false ID for the child and urged her to get a job dancing at a strip club in Providence. Shortly thereafter he posted an ad featuring her on Backpage and arranged encounters for her in Massachusetts and forced her to solicit clients at the Rhode Island club.
South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson has entered into a partnership with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to promote DHS’s Blue Campaign. The Attorney General’s Office will provide Blue Campaign training and awareness materials throughout the state to raise public consciousness of human trafficking.

**Federal Court Decisions**

Early this month, MasterCard and Visa announced that they would no longer allow their credit cards to be used to post ads on Backpage. The announcements from the credit card companies occurred shortly after Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart wrote a letter to the companies urging them to stop supporting Backpage through allowing their credit cards to be used to post ads. Backpage then sued Sheriff Dart in federal court alleging that his actions violated freedom of speech and due process. The complaint asked that the court issue a TRO to curtail “any further efforts by Dart to put Backpage out of business,” and then to issue an injunction “that would require him to, among other things, retract his prior letters to the credit card companies and inform them of any court decision to the effect that his ‘requests’ had been unlawful.” (See Backpage.Com, LLC v. Sheriff Thomas J. Dart, No. 15 C 06340, N.D. Ill., filed July 21, 2015). The court has now entered a TRO and further hearing on the matter will be held in August.

**Federal Legislative Activity**

The co-chairs of the Senate Caucus to End Human Trafficking, Senators Rob Portman (R-Ohio) and Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), have reintroduced the Human Trafficking Prioritization Act which would elevate the current Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons to a bureau within the State Department, headed by an Assistant Secretary. Thirteen other senators have joined as co-sponsors. [Note: Text of the bill and bill number are not currently available.]

A bill that would amend the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 to require certain companies to disclose the steps they are taking to combat forced labor in their supply chains was introduced on July 27. H.R. 3226, the Business Supply Chain Transparency on Trafficking and Slavery Act, was introduced by Reps. Chris Smith (R-N.J.) and Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.). Under the bill, those companies with over $100 million in global gross receipts would be required to include information on measures the company is taking to prevent trafficking as part of their annual reports to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

**State Legislative Activity**

Connecticut Governor Dannel Malloy signed into law HB6489, An Act Strengthening Protection for Victims of Human Trafficking. Among other things, the new law broadens the definition of what constitutes human trafficking when the victim is a minor and allows the use of wire taps when investigating human trafficking.

Florida Governor Rick Scott signed four bills aimed at curbing human trafficking in the state. The new laws increase the penalties for human traffickers, prevent the release of victims’
names and the location of safe houses, and require the posting of the phone number for the human trafficking hotline in public places.

The North Carolina legislature has passed HB 134 and sent it to the Governor for his signature. The bill would prohibit prosecution of minors arrested for soliciting as prostitutes but would, instead, place them in protecting custody while an investigation is launched into possible human trafficking.

**State Investigations/Arrests/Prosecutions**

**Alabama**

**July 24, 2015:** After a human trafficking and prostitution investigation, Homewood police arrested two Tennessee men, on charges of running a prostitution service out of a Homewood Hotel. Each was released on a $60,000 bond.

**July 14, 2015:** Jefferson County officials have announced that Jermaine Omar Williams, 34, from South Carolina, has been sentenced to 20 years in prison after pleading guilty to human trafficking charges. He brought teen girls to Birmingham and forced them into sexual servitude.

**Alaska**

**July 13, 2015:** A grand jury indictment filed in Anchorage Superior Court has charged Courtney Woods, 36 years old, with seven counts of sex trafficking.

**Arizona**

**July 9, 2015:** The Phoenix Department of Public Safety reported that it made two felony arrests, three misdemeanor arrests, and served three active warrants during a sweep targeting human trafficking near several commercial truck stops in Phoenix.

**California**

**July 30, 2015:** San Luis Obispo police arrested four individuals in connection with trafficking a 15-year-old girl from Manteca. One of those arrested was a 16-year-old male, Nikko Anaya, who is being charged as an adult. Police suspect him of being the ringleader of the group and forcing the victim into prostitution throughout San Luis Obispo County. The others arrested were 20-year old Fabio Bettencourt, 19-year old Elijah Wolfson, and 20-year old Brianne Day Morales.

**July 10, 2015:** A June traffic stop by a Berkeley police officer has led to charges against Michael Green that include human trafficking and transportation of a controlled substance. When the officer stopped Green’s car, he found a woman in the rear who was bleeding from her forehead. Subsequent investigation revealed that Green had hit the woman with a hammer and strangled her to force her into prostitution.
July 9, 2015: The Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force arrested Alfonso Keep Peterson on charges of human trafficking of a minor, pandering and procuring, and attempted pimping. He is accused of using a social networking website to recruit girls and women to work for him as prostitutes. He was identified through an undercover operation.

Colorado

July 22, 2015: Grand Junction police arrested 35 year old Kevin DeWayne Renfro on seven charges, including human trafficking of a child and child prostitution.

District of Columbia

July 10, 2015: D.C. police have arrested a couple, Janese Harris and Daraya Marshall, in connection with a sex trafficking ring which involved several underage girls. The children were forced to work out of an apartment in Southeast Washington.

July 24, 2015: Indian River County Sheriff’s detectives arrested Coeneal Peacock, 65, after a victim claimed that the suspect coerced her into prostitution. During the investigation, two other victims were discovered. Peacock is charged with one count of human trafficking and various drug charges.

Florida

July 9, 2015: Offices from the Tallahassee Police Department arrested Anthony Cappuccio, 26, for human trafficking and living off the earnings of a prostitute. The victim told police that she had fled a violent pimp while she was in New York. Cappuccio then forced her into working for him five years ago. Detectives found ads on his phone with photos of the woman. They also found a text which said he was leaving New York to go to Florida to escape a New York open case for Permitting Prostitution.

Georgia

July 23, 2015: Acting on a tip from the victim's mother, Norcross Police Department officers arrested Randy Michael Bell, 35, on human trafficking and pimping charges. The 18-year-old victim told police that Bell forced her to hold her feet in extremely hot water in a bathtub as a means to make her respect him and to teach her a lesson. The investigation is continuing.

July 6, 2015: Brookhaven police detectives arrested 51-year-old James Webb; he is charged with human trafficking, interference with child custody, and contributing to the delinquency of a minor. Police investigated Webb and they received a complaint from the Bartow County Division of Family and Children Services.

Indiana

July 2, 2015: Lake County sheriff's detectives arrested two Gary residents on charges of promoting prostitution. They will be charged federally under the Mann Act. Working with their federal partners, the sheriff's office conducted a search warrant and found evidence related to sex trafficking. The search was based on a report to Gary police in June when a
female contacted a friend via social media to say she was being held against her will after a woman she befriended online arranged to pick her up in Chicago to “hang out.”

Kentucky

July 20, 2015: Jonathan Diaz, 19, was arrested after an undercover investigation by the Franklin County Sheriff’s Office and Georgetown Police Department discovered him trying to prostitute a 15-year old.

July 2, 2015: Lexington police arrested Walker Wright Jr., 46, and charged him with kidnapping, promoting human trafficking, rape, and two counts of unlawful transaction with a minor. He is alleged to have kidnapped an intellectually disabled 15-year old girl for the purposes of trafficking her to provide sexual services.

Louisiana

July 17, 2015: A Jefferson County grand jury has indicted two Mississippi men, Willard Anthony and Pierre Brady, on charges of rape and human trafficking. Authorities allege the men met the victim at a Florida hotel where she was drugged and brought to metro New Orleans. The crimes were uncovered during a prostitution sting where authorities discovered the bruised victim and took her to a hospital for treatment.

July 10, 2015: DeSoto Parish sheriff officers arrested two individuals, Queisha Johnson and Willie King, Jr., on charges of contributing to the delinquency of a juvenile and indecent behavior with juveniles. Johnson is additionally charged with human trafficking.

July 1, 2015: Two men from Milwaukee were arrested by New Orleans police and charged with human trafficking, cruelty to juveniles, and contributing to the delinquency of a juvenile. James Brooks and Ogleeliyah Shadee Wesley are accused of forcing a 15-year old girl into prostitution.

Maryland

July 15, 2015: Cornelius Biddell was sentenced to 14 years in prison after being convicted of 34 counts including human trafficking, assault, and sex offense charges. According to prosecutor Kristen Schultz, Briddell ran a human trafficking operation, preying on women who were heroin addicts or recovering addicts. One of his victims testified, “All I was to them was a dollar sign, a thing to be sold.”

July 1, 2015: Frederick County sheriff's deputies have charged a Hagerstown man, Richard Dane Small, with human trafficking. A sheriff’s deputy, investigating possible prostitution at a local motel, saw Small and two girls exit a room there and get into Small’s silver Mercedes-Benz. After noticing a broken taillight and an expired registration, the deputy pulled the car over. Small provided a false name as did the two girls with him. A subsequent investigation revealed that Small had picked up a 15-year old and a 17-year old from Pennsylvania and was prostituting them for his own benefit.
Michigan

**July 20, 2015:** A drug investigation in Traverse City has led to charges relating to drug distribution and human trafficking. The alleged victim, a 25-year old from East Jordan, was initially arrested for selling drugs. An investigation revealed that she was being forced to act as a drug runner and prostitute herself by Jamel King.

**July 15, 2015:** A Michigan teen-ager, Mariah Haughton, 17, was sentenced to four to twenty years imprisonment by an Ingham County judge on her guilty plea to human trafficking and transporting of a female for prostitution. Haughton was primarily responsible for taking the photos of girls, aged 14 to 18, posting them on Backpage.com, and scheduling customers. She recruited girls on the street and at a juvenile center to work as prostitutes. Her partner in the ring, Christopher Bryant, 25, was earlier sentenced to 40 years in a federal prison for his role.

**July 8, 2015:** Rodriguez Torres, arrested in October 2013 on charges of selling heroin, was charged in the fall of 2014 with human trafficking and unlawful imprisonment. He is accused of driving two Adrian women to a migrant farm worker camp in Deerfield and forcing them to submit to sex for money. He has rejected a plea bargain that would have made him eligible for parole in 18 months and, instead, will go to trial where he faces sentences up to 20 years if convicted on all charges. Trial is now scheduled in Lenawee County Circuit Court on September 1 on the human trafficking charge.

Missouri

**July 17, 2015:** The St. Louis Circuit Attorney’s Office has charged two Texas residents, Thomas Szczesny and Keisha Edwards, with one count of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and promoting prostitution. Police allege that the victim was forced into prostitution in the St. Louis area and threatened with beatings and not allowed to sleep until she reached a daily quota.

Nebraska

**July 15, 2015:** Erick Mills, 31, pled no contest to a Class II felony of Sex Trafficking of a Minor in Platte County District Court. He is accused of driving a 16-year old girl from Omaha to Columbus, forcing her to sniff cocaine, and then attempting to prostitute her to two other men. When the men refused to pay him money to have sex with her, he raped her multiple times over several hours. He is scheduled to be sentenced in early August and faces a maximum of 50 years in prison.

Nevada

**July 1, 2015:** Las Vegas police, with the assistance of Homeland Security and the FBI, issued four search warrants in connection with an investigation into a sex trafficking ring.
New Jersey

**July 21, 2015:** Vorhees police have arrested several individuals and accused them of keeping a Texas woman hostage and forcing her to dance at a Philadelphia strip club. The victim, a Texas woman who had answered a Craigslist ad for a modeling job, escaped while being chased by two of those arrested. She made it to a bank where she asked employees to call 911. Among the people arrested is Stash Hackman, 25, who herself is a trafficking victim and who once spoke out about the horrors of being forced into prostitution. Arrested with Hackman were Michelle Rolon, 21, and Michael Watts, 43.

New Mexico

**July 1, 2015:** A trafficking victim reached out to Albuquerque police and said that a man had been forcing her to sell sex through ads on Backpage. Police arrested Shane Roach and found that he had posted multiple ads for women. He is also accused of beating women and threatening to kill them if they tried to leave.

Oklahoma

**July 28, 2015:** A woman, Goldie Richey, 31, has been arrested by Oklahoma City police and accused of human trafficking. According to the alleged victim, she had agreed to “party” with Richey in Stillwater. However, when they got there, Richey told her she was going to become a prostitute. When the victim refused, Richey allegedly threatened the woman’s 17-month-old child. In Oklahoma City, Richey created a Backpage ad and the victim met a man at an Oklahoma City hotel and another at an Edmond hotel.

Pennsylvania

**July 10, 2015:** Renell C. Quire, 21, was sentenced to serve three to six years for trafficking and having sexual relations with two minor runaway girls. He lured the girls through a dating website. According to Delaware County District Attorney Jack Whelan, Quire is the first to be charged, convicted, and sentenced under a revised state law that toughens penalties for human trafficking.

Rhode Island

**July 14, 2015:** Providence police responded to a report from a 26-year old woman that she had been shot at by one Nicholas Lopes as she was driving by him. Later investigation, conducted in partnership with a Homeland Security agent, discovered that the woman had been a victim of sex trafficking, forced into prostitution by Lopes. He has been arraigned on charges of sex trafficking, larceny, and felony assault.

**July 2, 2015:** When his daughter went missing, a Texas father tracked her down to Rhode Island where she had been lured by 34-year old Dujuan Harris. His daughter was found in a Providence apartment, being held against her will and being forced to prostitute herself. Providence police have charged Harris under a new state sex trafficking law that carries a possible 50-year prison term.
South Dakota

July 17, 2015: Sioux Falls police have arrested Michael Lee Dickey who now faces charges of first-degree human trafficking and on two counts of domestic aggravated assault. An investigation began when police responded to a medical emergency call and found a woman who complained of breathing difficulties. She alleged that her boyfriend had beaten her, injected her with narcotics two to three times a day, and then forced her to have sex with other men. Police found online prostitution ads featuring the victim posted on websites in South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

Texas

July 8, 2015: Johnta Deshun Silverburn has been indicted by the Collin County grand jury on felony charges alleging that he operated a brothel and trafficked a troubled teenager from El Paso.

Virginia

July 9, 2015: North Carolina resident Robert Lewis Dillard was arrested on human trafficking charges after Henrico County investigators found him and a woman who had been posted on Backpage.com. He is believed to be the first person arrested under Virginia’s new human trafficking laws.

July 9, 2015: Two individuals, Diontea Devonne Brooks and Jasmine Monique Manley, were arrested in late June and charged with sex trafficking in Newport News. They are alleged to have trafficked a woman from the Hampton Roads area at a local motel.

Articles of General Interest

Federal officials have uncovered a suspected labor trafficking ring that was smuggling illegal aliens, including teen-agers, into Ohio and having them work for the Trillum Farms egg producing facilities. A federal criminal indictment against the purported ring leaders was filed in January and announced earlier this month. In United States v. Castillo-Serrano et al, No. 3:15-cr-00024 (N.D. Ohio, Jan. 14, 2015), federal officials allege that those indicted were running a human trafficking ring where workers were promised a safe place to live and an education. Instead, they were housed in unsafe conditions in a trailer park and were threatened with death for themselves and their families back home. One teenager told investigators that he had received $100 from his paychecks during the four months he had been working despite six or seven 12-hour days a week.

The State Department released this year’s Trafficking in Persons Report. The upgrading of Malaysia and Cuba in the report has been criticized on the Senate floor, in the media and by non-governmental organizations. The chair and ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee have requested a briefing from the Secretary of State regarding the criteria used to upgrade several countries.
Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant received the Task Force on Human Trafficking's report last month. There were over 30 recommendations to Bryant to assist the state in dealing with this crime. It found that the most common form of exploitation was from family members and that the factors that led to domestic minor sex trafficking included poverty and lack of education as well as a high rate of police corruption and demand for prostitution.

The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (FDJJ) launched a pilot program in 2013 that involved a screening tool regarding the commercial sexual exploitation of a child. During the pilot phase, data revealed that victims were more likely to have alcohol and drug abuse history, were twice as likely to have foster placements, and were three times as likely to have multiple instances of running away. FDJJ has now expanded that screening tool across the state to assist with identifying children who are at risk for sexual exploitation.

The University of Toledo Human Trafficking and Social Justice Institute, the United Way of Greater Toledo, and the Lucas County Human Trafficking Coalition jointly developed a phone app that provides information and assistance with issues that can place vulnerable youth at risk for human trafficking. It is available in Spanish and English and is free for both Android and iPhone devices.

The Alaska Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development, Heidi Drygas, wrote an article for the Fairbanks newspaper on human trafficking in Alaska.

The former owner of a New Orleans motel, Kanhubhai Patel, has pled guilty in federal court to profiteering from sex traffickers. According to prosecutors, Patel ignored screams for help and evidence, including blood on the walls, a broken toilet and a damaged sink, that women were being abused in the rooms. He agreed not to call police when a pimp said he would pay to cover the damage. Patel regularly rented motel rooms at inflated prices to pimps and would open the motel gate to allow the women to bring back customers. He faces up to five years in prison.

The Placer County, California, Grand Jury has issued a report stating that a state-wide system is needed to track victims of human trafficking crimes. It also suggests the development of human trafficking awareness programs to educate the public, particularly foster families, about human trafficking.

Two communities have balked at having homes for human trafficking victims in their neighborhoods. In Valarico, Florida, the Sarasota-based nonprofit group Selah Freedom wants to open a safe house for sex trafficking victims and the homeowners’ association is fighting the application. In Snow Hill, North Carolina, Greene County Commissioners are opposing a home for male victims of sex trafficking that Restore One proposes to open.

Monroe County, Florida, Commissioners are discussing enacting an ordinance similar to that recently enacted by Palm Beach County that would require strippers to register with the county government. A new Florida law authorizes counties to adopt trafficking enforcement ordinances.
Flight attendants, through the Association of Flight Attendants, are calling on Congress to make the Department of Transportation/Department of Homeland Security's “Blue Lightning Initiative” a mandatory training program for all U.S. airlines through the FAA Reauthorization bill.