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.

September 2015

**News from AG Offices**

**Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey** announced that Marvin Popilus, 30, of Randolph was arrested and arraigned in connection with the trafficking multiple women for sex. The Attorney General’s office began an investigation after Randolph police referred the matter. Popilus is accused of targeting and recruiting women into engaging in prostitution and using violence and threats to control them. Alleged victims told investigators that Popilus would supply them with heroin and crack to support their drug habits.

**Nevada Attorney General Paul Laxalt** spoke at the second annual Benefit Dinner for Victims of Human Trafficking in August. The dinner, which was held in Reno, was cohosted by the Nevada Attorney General’s Office, Soroptimist International, and the Nevada Trucking Association.

**South Dakota Attorney General and NAAG President Marty Jackley** was interviewed by reporters at KSFY, the local ABC channel. He noted in the interview that traffickers were coming from different locations to traffic women into South Dakota as well as luring South Dakotans into prostitution. General Jackley also cited websites such as Backpage.com as facilitating sex trafficking by openly advertising on the web, and also stated that local authorities are powerless to stop such advertisements from being posted.

**Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes** and members of his staff met with visiting international guests, sponsored by the U.S. State Department, to discuss human trafficking.

**West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey** hosted a Truckers Against Trafficking event last month in Charleston. It was designed to educate West Virginians in the trucking and other industries about human trafficking and to discuss together how law enforcement and the trucking industry can collaborate to fight sex trafficking in the state.
In the Courts: Federal

The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, in United States v. German de Jesus Ventura, No. 13-4931 (Aug. 18, 2015), ruled that sex trafficking by force, fraud, or coercion, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1591(a), is not categorically a crime of violence. The ruling came in response to Ventura’s appeal of his conviction for conspiracy to commit and the commission of sex trafficking and for possession and use of a firearm in relation to a crime of violence.

A nationwide class action lawsuit has been filed against Nestle in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California. The plaintiffs, pet food purchasers, allege that Nestle knowingly supports a system of slave labor and human trafficking to produce its Fancy Feast cat food.

In Backpage.Com, LLC v. Sheriff Thomas J. Dart, No. 15 C 06340, N.D. Ill (Aug. 24, 2015), the federal district court denied a preliminary injunction request that would have forced Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart to retract statements he made in his effort to get credit card companies to stop use of their cards for posting ads on Backpage.com. The letters and statements did not amount to censorship, according to the court, because the sheriff had no authority to force the credit card companies to act.

In the Courts: State

The Indiana Court of Appeals upheld the conviction of Pardip Singh on attempted promotion of human trafficking as well as on Class C felony criminal confinement, and Class D felony intimidation. Singh attempted to traffic his wife, P.K., to another man. After the man arrived and she refused to comply, Singh beat her. Singh had married P.K. in India, having met her through a matchmaker there. She was driven to Indiana from Ohio in the back of cab of a semi-truck, given only water and cookies to drink, and not allowed to leave except to go to the bathroom, watched carefully by her husband. The court concluded that the evidence supported the conviction for attempted promotion of human trafficking and that the trafficking conviction and criminal confinement conviction were not barred on double jeopardy grounds. Singh v. Indiana, No. 49A02-1410-CR-00717 (Aug. 20, 2015).

In August, the Massachusetts Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Massachusetts sex trafficking statute. In Commonwealth v. Tyshaun McGhee et al., No. SJC-11821 (Mass. Aug. 13, 2015), the Court stated that the law was sufficiently clear and definite to withstand a challenge to vagueness and did not violate the defendants’ rights to due process.
**Federal Legislative Activity**

The Business Supply Chain Transparency on Trafficking and Slavery Act of 2015 was introduced in both the Senate and the House early last month. **S. 1968** and **H.R. 3226** require public companies with annual worldwide receipts above $100 million to include in their annual SEC reports a disclosure describing measures taken to identify and address human trafficking in their supply chains.

**State Investigations/Arrests/Prosecutions**

**Alabama**

**Aug. 31, 2015:** In [Calhoun County](#)'s first human trafficking case, after a preliminary hearing, Judge Chris McIntyre declared there was probable cause for the charge against Oxford resident, Ronnell Thomas, 35, and sent the case to the grand jury. Thomas has been charged with second-degree human trafficking.

**Aug. 19, 2015:** A man and a woman, Dominic Pruitt and Sheavonne Young, were arrested by [Birmingham police](#) for using a minor for prostitution. Both have been charged with commercial sex and human trafficking.

**California**

**Aug. 26, 2015:** A [Contra Costa County deputy district attorney](#) reported that James Joseph Jr., 50, and his common-law wife Avisa Lavassani, 34, have been arrested on suspicion of human trafficking. Also arrested was Anthony Reynolds, 42, who allegedly assisted the couple in running a large-scale sex trafficking ring. Joseph and Lavassani are each being held on $4 million bail and Reynolds’ bail has been set at $1 million. Authorities have been able to identify at least six women victimized over the past 14 years in an operation that served high-end clients throughout the country.

**Aug. 21, 2015:** [Fairfield police](#) began an investigation after receiving a tip that a victim of sex trafficking was in their area. They found and arrested an American Canyon resident, Robert Patterson, 19, for allegedly trafficking a 16-year old girl throughout California.

**Aug. 21, 2015:** A joint investigation by the [Oakland police department](#), the city attorney’s office, and the FBI has resulted in multiple arrests and, now, a lawsuit. Because of the human trafficking and drug arrests that have occurred there, the city attorney’s office has brought a nuisance abatement suit seeking to shut down the hotel for a year.

**Connecticut**

**Aug. 30, 2015:** [Bridgeport police](#) have arrested Brandon Williams, 34, after a report of an incident at the Sunnyside Inn. A 17-year old found at the motel alleged that Williams was holding her against her will and forcing her to engage in sex trafficking.
Aug. 27, 2015: During a prostitution sting, Bakersfield police arrested a 17-year old who identified her traffickers as Nathan Johnson-Harper, 30, and Ariel Mills, 24. Harper and Mills each being held on $260,000 bail for alleged human trafficking and conspiracy offenses.

August 28, 2015: Barry Davis has been arraigned on sex trafficking charges. Lawrence, Massachusetts, police alerted police in Milford that a missing woman's cellphone had been traced to a motel in Milford. Davis was allegedly pimping out three women.

Georgia

Aug. 18, 2015: Five people have been charged in an alleged human trafficking and prostitution ring in a LaGrange motel involving a 16-year-old girl. Detectives with the LaGrange Police Department were answering another call at the motel when they made contact with the teen. They asked her what she was doing at the motel without her parents. After investigating, detectives found an ad offering sexual services on Backpage.com featuring the teen and the three women who were with her. One suspected male pimp and all four females were arrested and charged. Another man is being sought. The 16-year old, a runaway, was returned to her family in Columbus.

Indiana

Aug. 24, 2015: In a sting operation run by local police in St. Joseph County, Mishawaka resident Patrick Zimmer has been charged with child solicitation and human trafficking. He allegedly offered to pay an undercover police officer for sex with underage girls.

August 21, 2015: A sixteen-year old walking home in Indianapolis was kidnapped and forced into sex trafficking. After she was raped, she was driven to Nashville where one of the defendants, Kevryn Gaines-Dukes, posted her pictures on Backpage. Another defendant, Myeisha White, was also involved in the sex trafficking scheme. She allegedly helped to buy lingerie for the teen-ager and showed her how to prostitute without getting hurt. The trio was traced to Edinburgh, Indiana, where federal and local law enforcement located them and rescued the teen.

Kentucky

Aug. 31, 2015: Bowling Green police have arrested 40-year old Anthony Johnson and charged him with human trafficking involving a child under 18.

Aug. 15, 2015: Kentucky State Police arrested Crystal Bradshaw and held her for extradition to Tennessee. The police were contacted by the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) who had tracked Bradshaw, accused of kidnapping a 15-year-old girl and trafficking her for sex, to Ashland, Kentucky. Bradshaw was on the TBI's Most Wanted list.
Aug. 14, 2015: A Clark County grand jury indicted Anna Lenz, 37, on a single count of human trafficking for allowing a 30-year-old to have a sexual relationship with a 14-year-old girl in exchange for utility payments. The man, Dustin Powers was indicted late in July on two counts of third-degree rape and one count of third-degree sodomy.

Maryland

Aug. 20, 2015: One of the two individuals arrested in connection with the burglary of an Easton home has also been linked to human trafficking. Easton police linked 35-year-old Christopher J. Wilkinson to the burglary and found evidence that he was involved in transporting a woman for prostitution as well. He has been charged with various theft counts as well as on human trafficking charges.

Aug. 17, 2015: According to Wicomico County State’s attorney Matt Maciarello, Marcus Foreman, 36, who had been charged with 18 counts of human trafficking, entered an Alford Plea and was sentenced to 15 years in prison for his role in participating in a sex trafficking ring in Salisbury. The leader of the ring, Cornelius Bridgell, was sentenced to 145 years in July. Foreman allegedly worked as a “look-out” at the hotel where women were held against their will and forced to have sex for money.

Aug. 8, 2015: A Montgomery County soccer coach, Armand Donfact, 35, of Germantown, was arrested on five charges of human trafficking and of operating a business of prostitution. Montgomery County law enforcement authorities allege that he used French web sites to traffic prostitutes from France and then advertised their services online in the United States.

Aug. 7, 2015: A Frederick County grand jury indicted Richard Dane Small, 30, on two counts of human trafficking involving two teenage girls. A Frederick County Sheriff’s Office deputy, investigating allegations of prostitution at a local motel, pulled over the defendant’s silver Mercedes-Benz after the officer saw two girls leave a room at the motel. One girl was identified as a missing Pennsylvania 15-year-old and the other was 17 years of age. A search of Small’s cellphone yielded information that Small was prostituting the teens for his own profit.

Michigan

Aug. 19, 2015: Jonathan Purnell, 28, pled guilty to two counts of transporting a female for purposes of prostitution after he agreed to a plea deal which dropped charges of human trafficking and encouraging minors to become prostitutes. He will be sentenced in Ingham County Circuit Court in September and faces from 5 ½ to 20 years in prison. Others involved in the same sex trafficking scheme that used Backpage.com to advertise at least eight girls have already been sentenced. Christopher Bryant was convicted in federal court and was sentenced to 40 years in prison; Mariah Haughton, 18, pled guilty to human trafficking and transporting a female for prostitution and was sentence to from four to twenty years in prison.
**Aug. 8, 2015:** As a result of a plea bargain, a Lenawee County Circuit Court judge sentenced Sergio Rodriguez Torres to a minimum three-year prison term who admitted selling heroin and forcing two women to submit to sex for money at a migrant farm worker camp in Deerfield in 2013. He was given credit for the 470 days he had already spent in jail.

**Minnesota**

**Aug. 20, 2015:** Thomas William Evans was sentenced by a Ramsey County district judge to serve 20 years in prison on his guilty plea to six of the seven felony charges against him. Evans was arrested with five other St. Paul adults and charged in a multistate sex trafficking ring that involved minors. Co-defendant Doris Keller was sentenced to 13 years, but the judge stayed the sentence and placed her on probation for 20 years. She had earlier pled guilty to one felony count of trafficking a minor. His other co-defendants are scheduled to be sentenced later this month.

**New Jersey**

**Aug. 31, 2015:** Atlantic City Prosecutor Jim McClain announced that Dannie T. Bethea, 42, pled guilty to forcing seven women into prostitution in Atlantic City and Egg Harbor Township. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison, 13 years on the first degree human trafficking charge and 7 years for sexual assault.

**Aug. 28, 2015:** A truck driver from California, Bogart Velasco, has been charged with human trafficking involving two young girls, 13 and 15 years old, whom he allegedly drove to New Jersey to have them act as prostitutes. Bail has been set at $500,000. The Bergen County prosecutor’s office reports that a California woman called police to report that social media indicated that her niece and another girl were at a hotel in Elmwood Park.

**New York**

**Aug. 26, 2015:** A Jefferson County Court judge sentenced Vandon Jones, 51, to up to 34 years in state prison for his role in running a sex trafficking ring. He was accused of impairing a woman’s judgment with heroin and running a prostitution operation for seven months in 2014.

**Aug. 7, 2015:** Rockland County District Attorney Thomas Zugibe announced that five would-be sex buyers were arrested in an ongoing effort to address the demand side of sex trafficking.

**Aug. 1, 2015:** Vandon Jones, 51, was convicted after trial in Jefferson County Court of two counts of sex trafficking, four counts of attempted sex trafficking, third-degree promoting prostitution, and third-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance.
Ohio

Aug. 24, 2015: A Delaware County jury found two of the three family members who had been charged with sex trafficking guilty on numerous accounts of promoting prostitution, money laundering, and practicing medicine without a license with human trafficking specifications. The massage parlor owners were accused of keeping women against their will and forcing them to sleep at night on their massage tables.

Aug. 10, 2015: Derek Jamieson, 32, accepted a plea deal that required him to plead guilty to 40 counts, including unlawful sexual conduct with a minor, trafficking in marijuana, and compelling prostitution. Three counts of human trafficking were dropped. He was sentenced by Muskingum County Common Pleas Court Judge Mark Fleegle to 25 years in prison and classified as a Tier II sex offender.

Aug. 4, 2015: According to Franklin County Prosecutor Ron O’Brien, Raymont Abdul Durwin, 41, lured two women into prostitution over the course of a year. He has been charged with two counts of trafficking in persons, two counts of compelling prostitution, and one count of promoting prostitution. His girlfriend, Anita Ross Gordon, 34, has been charged with promoting prostitution.

South Dakota

Aug. 19, 2015: Sioux Falls police, answering a prostitution-related online advertisement, found two women who claim that they were being forced into prostitution. Authorities arrested two men and two women in connection with the suspected sex trafficking scheme. Two other individuals, a husband and wife, have been arrested and charged with several drug charges.

Aug. 13, 2015: During the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, there were four felony arrests for sex trafficking or solicitation. Aaron Vandekamp, 21, was arrested for solicitation of a minor. Toby Magnuson, 44, Marcus Dorsey, 35, and Michael Preston, 27, were arrested for attempted commercial sex trafficking.

Texas

Aug. 28, 2015: An investigation into a man who sought a 2-year-old and a 4-year-old for sexual activity has led to the arrest of William Taylor. A search warrant executed by members of the McLennan County Sheriff’s Office and Homeland Security Investigations discovered that Taylor was in possession of hundreds of pictures and videos of very young children engaged in sexual acts. He has been charged with conspiracy to commit human trafficking and promotion of child pornography.

Washington

Aug. 30, 2015: Marteze Ravoine Clair, 28, was sentenced to 20 years in prison after pleading guilty to second degree human trafficking and three counts of promoting
prostitution in the second degree. According to Pierce County officials, Clair is a well-known East Side Piru gang member.

**Wisconsin**

**Aug. 26, 2015:** An Eau Claire man, Nicholas Billiot, 28, has pled not guilty to sex trafficking and related charges. He is accused of forcing a 19-year old girl into a vehicle and taking her to an area hotel where he told her that he was going to arrange for several men to have sex with her.

**Articles of General Interest**

Former Subway pitchman Jared Fogle has agreed to plead guilty to federal charges involving possessing child pornography and having sex with underage girls. The *Washington Post* ran an op-ed wondering why he wasn't charged with sex trafficking and rape, but noting that New York, where the sex acts allegedly took place, could still bring charges.

Two men pled guilty to federal charges of labor trafficking involving recruiting and smuggling workers from Guatemala, some as young as 14, to work at an egg farm in Marion, Ohio. The workers were forced to live in dilapidated trailers and work physically demanding jobs for up to 12 hours a day for minimal amounts of money. According to the indictment, the defendants threatened workers with physical harm and withheld their paychecks to compel them to work. The men, Aroldo Castillo-Serrano, of Guatemala, and Conrado Salgado Soto, of Mexico, also pled guilty to a related immigration offense. Two other defendants have pled guilty to immigration offenses in connection with this case. A third co-conspirator has also been charged.

A software product has been developed, that is designed to mine the deep web for information and clues about trafficking operations. Developed by Emily Kennedy, who started working on it while she was a student at Carnegie Mellon University under a grant received from the federal Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, the software, named *Traffic Jam*, has helped to locate more than 120 victims of human trafficking. More information about the software may be obtained by contacting Marinus Analytics in Pittsburgh.

In other news regarding software that will help law enforcement to locate victims of human trafficking, it was recently announced that University of Southern California researchers have developed an online tool that scours sites where traffickers post ads, extracts data, and reorganizes into a continually updated database. Domain-specific insight graphs (DIGS) will search about 50 million sites that advertise for sex with information such as a name, a phone number, or a photo.

On August 2, 193 UN members agreed on 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that aim to eradicate hunger and extreme poverty. The SDGs include a pledge to eradicate trafficking and slavery.
Amnesty International adopted a resolution urging the worldwide decriminalization of prostitution.

Colorado Springs police have decided on a strategy to combat sex trafficking. Since buying sex is generally a misdemeanor and, thus, not a strong deterrent, police have decided to release names and photos of those offenders who purchase sex in order to help dissuade anyone else from committing that crime.