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.

**February 2015**

**News from AG Offices**

[Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich](https://www.azattorneygeneral.gov) joined Cindy McCain in a new campaign by a billboard company to raise awareness of sex trafficking in advance of this year's Super Bowl.

[California Attorney General Kamala Harris](https://www.caag.gov) gave the keynote address at a UCLA Law Review Symposium, “Examining the Roots of Human Trafficking and Exploitation,” at the end of last month. At the symposium, Gen. Harris noted that 59% of children arrested for prostitution in Los Angeles County were in the foster care system at some point in their lives.

As part of National Human Trafficking Awareness Month, [Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller](https://www.in.gov/atg) visited two northern Indiana cities that have been working to fight trafficking regionally.

[Mississippi Attorney General Jim Hood](https://www.msa.state.ms.us) has published a human trafficking brochure on the Attorney General website. As a member of Governor Bryant’s Human Trafficking Task Force, he joined the Governor and others at a press conference on the formation of the task force.

[Montana Attorney General Tim Fox](https://www.mt.gov) hosted a rally in support of human trafficking legislation that is being considered by the state legislature. [HB 89](https://www.mt.gov) contains a number of measures which would strengthen Montana’s human trafficking laws, including ensuring that child victims are treated as victims, not criminals, and force people convicted of sex trafficking to face mandatory asset forfeiture.

[Nebraska Attorney General Doug Peterson](https://www荼đ corruption.gov) has announced that human trafficking is on the top of his first legislative package. [LB 294](https://www荼đ corruption.gov) would increase penalties for solicitation of
prostitution, pandering, and for keeping a place for prostitution and allow the victims of human trafficking to file a civil lawsuit against the perpetrators.

Nevada Attorney General Adam David Laxalt announced that his first major initiative will be to host a law enforcement summit for sheriffs, chiefs, and district attorneys to discuss key issues in their communities, including human trafficking.

South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson held a news conference early last month to discuss human trafficking legislation proposed in the 2015 session, S. 196 and H. 3125. The proposed legislation would give the State Grand Jury authority to investigate human trafficking and provide law enforcement the necessary tools to go after traffickers.

Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes wrote an op-ed piece regarding human trafficking and recounted his experience of travelling to South America on an undercover mission with Operation Underground Railroad (OUR), a nonprofit established to combat child sexual trafficking around the world, and a sting that liberated 127 girls, from 10 to 16 years of age, from sexual slavery.

Wisconsin Attorney General Brad Schimel announced that Lindy Gill of Madison pled guilty to two counts of human trafficking and one count of receiving compensation from the earnings of a commercial act. The victims told investigators that he forced them into being escorts by ensuring they were addicted to heroin and threatening with withholding the drug from them. One woman said that he threatened to take her daughter away from her.

**Federal Legislative Activity**

Late last month, the House of Representatives passed 12 separate bills addressing Human Trafficking. Most of these bills were also passed in the last Congress, but were not put up for votes in the Senate.

- **H.R. 159**, the Stop Exploitation through Trafficking Act of 2015, amends the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act. It is similar to H.R. 3610, introduced last session, in that it would encourage states to adopt safe harbor laws for trafficked children and to provide welfare services by giving them preference in applications for Community Oriented Police Services (COPS) grants. It would also amend the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 by requiring certain reporting by the Attorney General.

- **H.R. 181**, The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 authorizes the appropriation of $5 million annually over a period of five years for the Department of Justice to provide grants to state and local governments to improve the investigation and prosecution of child trafficking crimes and to assist victims. It would also amend the TVPA by making it a federal crime, to solicit commercial sex from a minor.
- **H.R. 246**, To Improve the Response of Victims of Child Sex Trafficking, would amend the Missing Children's Assistance Act by striking "child prostitution" and inserting, instead, "child sex trafficking, including child prostitution in reporting categories for the national Center for Missing and Exploited Children. This bill passed 410-0.


- Three of the passed bills call for increase education for federal workers. **H.R. 357**, the Human Trafficking Prevention Act, would require additional training for Department of State personnel. **H.R. 460**, the Human Trafficking Detection Act of 2015, would require the Department of Homeland Security to implement a human trafficking awareness program for agency employees, including the Transportation Security Administration and Customs and Border Protection. **H.R. 468**, Enhancing Services for Runaway and Homeless Victims of Youth Trafficking Act of 2015, would require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to give priority to staff training projects that relate to sex trafficking and would authorize grants to provide services to children at risk of being subject to sexual abuse or exploitation. It also would amend the Runaway and Homeless youth Act with respect to grants to entities regarding projects designed to improve services to runaway and homeless youths.

- **H.R. 398** would allocate funding for the development and dissemination of anti-trafficking training for health care professionals.

- **H.R. 469** would amend the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, would create additional reporting requirements for state child welfare systems regarding human trafficking. It passed 410-0.

- **H.R. 514**, the Human Trafficking Prioritization Act, would change the status of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in the Department of State to a Bureau with the Department, headed by an Assistant Secretary rather than an Ambassador-at-Large.

- **H.R. 515**, the International Megan's Law to Prevent Demand for Sex Trafficking would provide advance notice of intended travel by registered child sex offenders to
the government of the country of destination, requesting that government to notify the U.S. when the known offender is seeking to re-enter the country.

In the Senate, S. 295, the Amy and Vicky Child Pornography Victim Restitution Improvement Act of 2015, was passed. This bill would overturn the Supreme Court’s decision last term in Paroline v. United States, No. 12-8561 (Apr. 23, 2014), that determined that a victim of child pornography could not recover, under 18 U.S.C. § 2259, against the defendant who took the photos for the damages caused by redistribution of the images. Although not a human trafficking bill, it is included in this newsletter because of the close association between child pornography and child sex trafficking.

In the Senate, the following bills were introduced:

- With bipartisan support S.140, the Combat Human Trafficking Act, was introduced in the Senate. The bill would expand Justice Department reporting on trafficking prosecutions, allow authorities to use wiretapping to catch human traffickers, and strengthen victims’ rights. The bill is similar to S. 2941, which was introduced last session.

- S. 166, the Stop Exploitation through Trafficking Act of 2015, was introduced and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary. It is similar to H.R. 159 in that it encourages states to adopt safe harbor laws for trafficked minors by giving such states priority in receiving grants under the COPS program. It also would provide continued funding for the National Human Trafficking hotline.

- S. 178, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015, was introduced with bipartisan support. This bill, among other things, would establish a domestic trafficking victims’ fund, require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to designate domestic victims as victims of severe forms of trafficking under the TVPA, and establish grants for training and victim services, including for victims of child pornography.

- S. 381 is a bill to improve the response to missing children and victims of child sex trafficking. However, the text of the bill has not yet been made available.

The following bills have been introduced into the House.

- H.R. 63 would direct the Secretary of Homeland Security to develop a database that would serve as a central location on information from investigations into human trafficking, accessible to federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.

- H.R. 500 would establish the United States Advisory Council on Human Trafficking to provide recommendations to the Senior Policy Operating Group and the
President’s Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. It has been referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and to the Committee on the Judiciary.

- **H.R. 611**, the Sex Trafficking Demand Reduction Act, was also introduced on January 28. It would amend the TVPA by establishing new criteria for determining the efforts foreign countries make to reduce trafficking and commercial sex acts. It has been sent to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

In addition, Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney (C-NY) and Congressman Ted Poe (R-TX) announced plans to reintroduce the Human Trafficking Fraud Enforcement Act, which would give the Internal Revenue Service more funding and resources to go after pimps and traffickers for taxable income, as well as provide financial assistance and whistleblower protections to survivors.

**State Legislative Activity**

Rep. Jack Williams, chairman of the Alabama Human Trafficking Task Force, announced that he will be introducing a bill to add a provision that would prevent teenaged trafficking victims from being charged with prostitution. He also plans to introduce legislation to update Alabama’s Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act to make it easier for law enforcement to go after massage parlors involved in prostitution and to seize property.

HB2553 is being considered by the Arizona Legislature. If passed, it would give sex trafficking victims the ability to ask a judge to vacate their criminal records.

The legislature in Hawaii is considering a number of human trafficking related bills. SB 265 would be Hawaii’s first sex trafficking law. It would replace the term “promoting prostitution” with the term “sex trafficking.” It would also criminalize those soliciting a prostitute in reckless disregard that the person was a victim of sex trafficking and would authorize wire taps for sex trafficking investigations. SB 979 would establish a pilot program where youth in crisis could access services. HB 1351 and a companion bill, SB 917, would permit the Department of Human Services to contract with a service provider to operate and manage a sex trafficking special treatment facility. SB 909 would require the department of human services to provide emergency care services such as housing, shelter, rehabilitation, education, vocational, medical, mental health, and substance abuse treatment to minor sex trafficking victims and appropriates funds.

The Indiana Senate is considering HB 1216, which was passed by the House late last month. The bill would provide a safe harbor for minors involved in sex trafficking, ensuring that they won’t be arrested but that, instead, police will notify the Department of Child Services. Two Senate Bills are also under consideration. SB 375, which has passed the Senate, would expand asset forfeiture provisions to include the ability to seize property used to commit the crime of human trafficking as well as property obtained with proceeds of the crime. SB 532 expands the indecent nuisance statute to include human trafficking. The Indiana Attorney General’s Office is a prosecuting authority under this statute.
In Missouri, legislators are considering SB 211 and HB 388, which would extend the protection of the state’s “Safe at Home” program to human trafficking survivors. That program allows those who were victims of certain crimes to hide their home addresses. The program provides survivors with a new, substitute mailing address.

The Rhode Island Legislature is considering S 123 which would increase penalties for those convicted of sex trafficking a minor to 50 years’ incarceration.

The North Dakota legislature is considering a package of human trafficking bills. SB 2107 would increase penalties for traffickers and provide victims with legal protections. SB 2199 would provide $1 million for a pilot project for provide services for victims. SB 2219 would establish a statewide human trafficking commission. SB 2232 would raise the statute of limitations for human trafficking offenses. SB 2250 would raise the penalty for pimping to the felony level.

In Tennessee, SB 16 is being considered. It calls for more training for law enforcement in identifying, investigation, and prosecuting human trafficking cases in Tennessee. A companion bill, H.B. has been introduced in the House.

In Virginia, HB 1964 passed the House and is being considered by the Senate. It would make it a felony to recruit, transport, or harbor a minor for prostitution and would increase penalties for sex trafficking depending on a victim’s age.

**State Investigations/Arrests/Prosecutions**

**Florida**

Jan. 30: Orlando’s Metropolitan Bureau of Investigation arrested three individuals and charged them with human trafficking after a raid in a South Orange County home where the three were conducting a prostitution operation. The police allege that the three were using violent threats against a woman to force her to prostitute herself.

Jan. 8: A six-month investigation by Orlando’s Metropolitan Bureau of Investigation led to the arrest of Aaron David George a year ago. He had been arrested many times since the early 1990s and had served several prison terms in Florida, the first for the 1997 rape of a teen-aged girl. He has now been sentenced to life in prison after he was found guilty of human trafficking, sexual activity with a minor, racketeering, and deriving support from prostitution.

**Illinois**

Jan. 13: Eighteen-year old Ferid Mahalbasic of Waterloo, Iowa, was arrested by Chicago police and charged with Involuntary Sexual Servitude of a Minor and Involuntary Servitude. He allegedly forced two young women, ages 17 and 18, to engage in prostitution.

**Maine**
Jan. 2: Bangor police arrested an Auburn man and a Lewiston woman on charges of aggravated sex trafficking. The FBI had asked for assistance with a missing person case involving a 13-year old who was allegedly soliciting prostitution on Backpage in Boston, Bangor, and Portland. Police set up a meeting with the girl who arrived at the hotel with the two adults.

Mississippi

Jan. 15: Madison-Rankin District Attorney Michael Guest announced that a Jackson man was sentenced to 25 years, with 12 years suspended, on his pleading guilty to trafficking a 16-year old girl.

New York

Jan. 16: As part of a larger human trafficking operation, the Albany County Sheriff’s Office arrested ten people who are facing prostitution charges related to operations at four unlicensed Asian massage parlors in Colonie.

Ohio

Jan. 17: Bond has been set at $500,000 for the owners of three massage parlors who are suspected of running a human trafficking operation. The married couple, Qing Xu and Xiao Shuang Chao, have been charged by a Delaware County grand jury with engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity and with promoting prostitution, both in the furtherance of human trafficking. A third defendant, Chao’s sister, has also been indicted.

Rhode Island

Jan. 14: State police arrested Damien Beverly and charged him with interstate transportation for purposes of prostitution, sex trafficking by force, fraud and coercion, and distribution of heroin. Two female victims were recovered.

Jan. 20: Providence police arrested 21-year old Derek Miranda, charging him with kidnapping and sex trafficking. He is accused of taking three girls, ages 14 and 15, from Massachusetts to Rhode Island, for prostitution. One of the girls managed to escape and her father called police. The two other girls were found with Miranda in the apartment.

Virginia

Jan. 9: New Kent County deputies arrested two Iowa natives, Aldair Hodza and Laura Sorensen, after they received a tip about suspicious activity at a Virginia truck stop. Police found three people in a car and asked to speak to the juvenile. She told them she had been kidnapped and sexually and physically abused and forced to have sexual relations with a man at the truck stop that had been contacted on Craig’s List. State police are further investigating and charges are pending.

Wisconsin
Jan. 2: In August, Roya Weatherall Jr. was convicted of a dozen counts involving sex trafficking stemming from two different cases involving four victims. He was also found guilty of trying to intimidate a witness after the jury heard him threaten to kill his own mother. Early last month, he was sentenced to 56 years in state prison.

Articles of General Interest

In observance of National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month, the Department of Defense announced that DOD workforce awareness of human trafficking issues has increased from 72 percent in 2008 to nearly 90 percent. DOD provides training to both employees and to contractor offices and representatives on foreign soil.

The U.S. Department of Education has released a guide to help educators recognize and respond to cases of child trafficking.