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.

March 2015

News from AG Offices

**Georgia Attorney General Sam Olens** secured a [16-count indictment](#) involving commercial sexual exploitation of three minors against Khiry Price. The case will be jointly prosecuted by Assistant Attorney General Camila Wright and Cobb County Assistant District Attorney Chuck Boring. General Olens also hosted a [Truckers Against Trafficking](#) training and conference last month.

**Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healy** filed a [brief](#) in U.S. District Court in Boston, urging the court not to dismiss a lawsuit against Backpage.com. The lawsuit was filed by three women who allege they were sold for sex on the website when they were as young as fifteen. The cities of [Atlanta, Denver, Houston, Philadelphia, Portland, and San Francisco](#) also filed a brief in support of the lawsuit.

**South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson** held meetings of subcommittees of the state human trafficking task force.

**Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes** testified before the Utah House Law Enforcement Committee in favor of [HB 252](#). It would remove the requirement to prove force, fraud, or coercion in prosecuting the trafficker of a minor.

Court Cases

In a labor trafficking lawsuit that stemmed from the clean-up activities after Hurricane Katrina, five guest workers from India won $14.8 million against Signal International, an immigration lawyer, and a job recruiter. Another dozen or so related lawsuits are set to go to trial regarding similar allegations of labor trafficking.

Federal Legislative Activity
Last month, the Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously passed two bipartisan human trafficking bills. **S. 178**, the Justice for Victims Act, would use fines and penalties assessed against perpetrators for restitution and assistance for victims. A version of this bill, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, **H.R. 181**, was passed by the House in January. The other bill, **S. 166**, the Stop Exploitation Through Trafficking Act, would create a safe harbor for minor victims of sex trafficking. As an amendment to S. 178, **The HERO Act of 2015** was passed by the committee by voice vote. The bill would ensure continued funding for the Human Exploitation Rescue Operative (HERO) Corps program which recruits wounded, injured, and ill service members and provides them with training in high-tech computer forensics and law enforcement skills to help fight global child sexual exploitation.

**S. 553**, the End Modern Slavery Act Initiative of 2015, was introduced late last month. The bill would allocate $1.5 billion to strengthen the fight against global human trafficking. It calls for the establishment of a foundation that will fund international programs to free victims and tackle the issue throughout the world. The funding initiative would require $250 million in taxpayer money over eight years with $750 million coming from the private sector and $500 million from foreign governments.

**S. 529** has been introduced and referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee. It combines the text of three bills, **H.R. 468**, Enhancing Services for Runaway and Homeless Victims of Youth Trafficking Act, **H.R. 246**, To Improve the Response to Victims of Child Sex Trafficking, and **H.R. 350**, the Human Trafficking Prevention, Intervention, and Recovery Act of 2015. These bills were all passed by the House in January.

**State Legislative Activity**

The **Alaska Senate Judiciary Committee** is considering **SB 21**. It includes a provision that would allow those charged with prostitution an affirmative defense that they were victims of trafficking.

A bill similar to the law that was passed in Georgia last year is being considered by the **Florida legislature**. **SB 534** and its companion House bill would require the Department of Transportation to post signs at rest stops and welcome centers posting the National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline. The bill would also require similar signs in strip clubs, truck stops, public libraries, public schools, emergency rooms, airports, and other establishments.

A bill that would allow human trafficking victims to petition courts to vacate and expunge criminal records is before the **Idaho Legislature**. **SB 1103** would also apply to other non-violent offenses that were the result of the enslavement.

In **Indiana**, **SB 532**, which expands the indecent nuisance statute to include human trafficking passed the Senate and is now in front of the House. The Indiana House is considering **SB 296** which would, among other things, require proof of age and photographs for adult entertainment performers and require all employees of adult entertainment venues to sign a document acknowledging their awareness of the problem of human
trafficking. The bill gives the Alcohol and Tobacco Commission enforcement authority regarding the proposed provisions. The bill has passed the Senate.

A bill, HB 152, which adds knowingly advertising a minor for sex activity or performance to the definition of human trafficking, is under consideration by the Missouri legislature.

AB108 is under consideration by Nevada lawmakers. It would add trespassing to the list of crimes that trafficking victims could have expunged from their records.

In the North Dakota legislature, SB 2107, which would increase penalties for traffickers and provide victims with legal protections, passed the Senate. The Senate also passed SCR 4107, a resolution to support the federal Stop Advertising Victims of Exploitation Act. Other human trafficking measures which passed the Senate were SB 2199, which allocates $1 million for a pilot project for victim services; SB 2332, which addresses penalties, including attendance at John School, for those who hire a person for sexual activity; SB 2250, upgrading the offense of facilitating prostitution to a Class A felony; SB 2219, which would establish a statewide human trafficking commission; SB 2275, which would add five years to the maximum prison time for sex traffickers who force or coerce victims to get an abortion; and SB 2232, establishing the statute of limitations for human trafficking at seven years. HB 1347, which would add “human trafficking” to the disorderly conduct code, passed the House.

In the middle of last month, the Oklahoma House passed and sent to the Senate for its consideration HB 1006 which would authorize the use of wiretaps to investigate human trafficking, the pandering of humans for sex, and the prostitution of a child.

HB 418 has been introduced into the Texas legislature. It addresses the issue of child trafficking by allowing both police officers and Child Protective Services workers to immediately take suspected child trafficking victims into custody and place them into foster care prior to receiving a court order. A court order of attachment would then be required to be filed.

The Virginia Legislature has passed the Commonwealth's first legislation to create a stand-alone law regarding human trafficking. SB 1188 and HB 1964. It awaits Governor McAuliffe's signature.

A bill that would require the posting of human trafficking signs in all public restrooms is in front of the Washington State Senate. Under SB 5883, the costs of printing and distributing the notices would be covered by anti-trafficking non-profit organizations. Another bill, SB 5884, would require the state's Office of Crime Victims Advocacy to create a website to gather information on anti-trafficking efforts around the state. A third bill, SB 5933, directs the Office of Crime Victims Advocacy to establish a training program for criminal justice staff around the state who investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate human trafficking crimes.
State Investigations/Arrests/Prosecutions

Alabama

Feb. 22, 2015: A Madison County grand jury has handed down a multi-count indictment against a former Guntersville girls’ soccer coach and the woman, Kristian Griffin, who allegedly brought girls to the coach’s house. David Barrow faces charges including human trafficking, sexual abuse, and sodomy. Barrow is in jail on a $2.5 million bond.

Alaska

Feb. 20, 2015: Anchorage police teamed up with the FB to arrest 31-year old Xavier Lanell Cook Benson, who was indicted by a Grand Jury on 12 counts relating to his operating a sex trafficking and prostitution enterprise in Anchorage, Juneau, Kenai, and Fairbanks.

Arkansas

Feb. 13, 2015: Roy Merritt, a known gang member in Texas, was arrested by Fayetteville Police on human trafficking charges. Police responded to a disturbance and found a woman who said she and Merritt fought because he was trying to lure her sister into prostitution. She said that Merritt encouraged her to leave Kansas and meet him in Georgia to become a dancer, but he, instead, forced her into prostitution. The woman said Merritt threatened her, used physical violence against other prostitutes, and withheld her property.

California

Feb. 26, 2015: The Santa Clara County District Attorney's Office announced charges against a 32-year old Oakland man for trafficking a teenage girl who, officials believe, he picked up from a Bible study and exploited as a sex worker.

Feb. 17, 2015: Three men were arrested in Riverside County in a human trafficking and child pornography investigation. Prosecutors alleged that William Thompson of Las Vegas paid foster care provider and special education teacher assistant John Yoder of Desert Hot Springs to recruit young boys to be photographed for use in child pornography. A telephone number in Thompson's phone connected to an Erick Monsivais who was charged with sodomy and related human trafficking charges.

Feb. 13, 2015: The Merced County District Attorney's Office has filed one count each of human trafficking and possession of pornographic material of a minor against Stephen Montgomery and his girlfriend, Amanda Baker. According to the charges, the couple forced a 16-year old runaway into prostitution in Merced and other parts of the state.

Feb. 6, 2015: Darryl Williams, who was already facing felony charges of human trafficking in Clear Lake, was arrested by Roseville police on allegations of forced prostitution across county lines. Roseville narcotics detectives obtained intelligence that Williams was conducting a pimping operation out of a local motel. Two victims were located, but one eluded police before she could be questioned.

Florida

Feb. 23, 2015: Miami police have arrested a popular singer, Puerto Rican Yamir Gorritz, his girlfriend, Mariela Perez, and a third person on sex trafficking charges. Gorritz is alleged to be the person behind a sex trafficking ring operating in South Florida.

Feb. 18, 2015: Local police arrested three men from Hialeah on human trafficking charges involving a child. They were arrested at a motel that rents rooms for a minimum of three hours and markets itself as a “love sanctuary.”

Idaho

Feb. 18, 2015: A 29-year old Garden City woman has pled guilty to facilitating prostitution of a teenage girl. She listed a 16-year old on Backpage.com and drove her to meet with clients for sex around Boise. Her plea was part of an agreement to avoid the more serious charge of human trafficking. She will be sentenced on April 3.

New Hampshire

Feb. 23, 2015: The Merrimack County Grand Jury has indicted William and Julie Shine for child sex trafficking and related charges. They allegedly offered a minor juvenile for sex for $1,000 and for marriage for $5,000.

New York

Feb. 5, 2015: A Binghamton man, who was arrested late last year, has been indicted on 27 counts, including 13 felony counts of second-degree promotion of prostitution, six felony counts of third-degree rape, two felony counts of sex trafficking and a handful of misdemeanor counts. Antonio Ballard is accused of profiting from the prostitution of a 15-year old. Police were led to Ballard during the investigation and subsequent arrest of two other local individuals in November and December who have been charged with sex trafficking and promoting prostitution.

North Carolina

Feb. 9, 2015: The Cumberland County Sheriff’s Office arrested 24-year old Layon Robinson and charged him with promoting prostitution and facilitating prostitution of a minor.

North Dakota

Feb. 14, 2015: Grand Forks Police arrested eight men following a prostitution sting.
Oregon

Feb. 19, 2015: Beaverton police arrested a 24-year old Las Vegas-area man, Reginald Manning, for promotion of prostitution. Detectives spotted an online ad for escort services and arranged to meet the girl. When they met, police determined that the 16-year old was listed as a missing and endangered person from Portland. Manning had driven the girl to the motel. When he was arrested, he was carrying a loaded handgun.

Pennsylvania

Feb. 20, 2015: Pennsylvania State troopers pulled over a vehicle on Interstate 81. Inside the vehicle, they found thousands of bags of heroin and four teenage girls who allegedly were forced to provide sex to customers. Robert Middlebrook, 40, and Roniece Norfleet, 21, were arrested on human trafficking and drug charges.

Rhode Island

Feb. 12, 2015: Rhode Island State Police troopers pulled over a couple's car in Providence because it was missing a front license plate. During the stop, a woman in the back seat wrote “GET ME OUT THE CAR” on her phone and displayed it to police. The driver, Niesha Bessell, and her boyfriend, Michael Gomes, were arrested. The woman told police that she had been kidnapped and been forced into prostitution by Bessell and Gomes.

Feb. 1, 2015: A 19-year old man has been charged with sex trafficking of two teenage girls in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Providence police and federal Homeland Security Investigation agents arrested Reginald Chaney. The girls involved were 15 and 16. Chaney is alleged to have used a stun gun on the girls.

Tennessee

Feb. 25, 2015: Memphis police have arrested a 30-year old man on charges of sex trafficking of a 16-year old girl. He has also been charged in a separate sex trafficking case involving two other women.

Jan. 20, 2015: A Memphis man has been sentenced to 10 years in prison on charges that he trafficked a 14-year old girl.

Virginia

Feb. 13, 2015: A concerned citizen saw a frightened looking woman peak out of the curtains of a recreational vehicle at a truck stop. He called New Kent County police who subsequently arrested a couple from Iowa. They were charged with sex trafficking after an interview with the woman who told investigators that she had been forced to engage in prostitution during a trip from Iowa to Virginia.
Washington

Feb. 9, 2015: A truck driver, Brian Murphy, was arrested at his home in Miami, Oklahoma, by local and federal officials on charges that he offered money to his girlfriend, whom he met online, in exchange for having sex with her 14-year-old daughter in Washington State. The mother was arrested in January after her daughters went to police.

Feb. 5, 2015: A Seattle man, Desmond Manago, who was prosecuted in King County Superior Court in 2009 as a member of the West Sid Street Mobb, has been sentenced in U.S. District Court in Seattle to 10 years in prison and 25 years of supervised release for sex trafficking of a minor. Manago continued his prostitution business while he was incarcerated in state prison, requiring women to pay some of their earnings to him in jail. Assisting with the investigation on the current case were the King County Sheriff’s Office and the Tacoma Police Department. Manago pled guilty in federal court for forcing a minor to engage in prostitution in Washington, Idaho, Colorado, Arizona, and California.

Jan. 27, 2015: The mother of a trafficking victim is credited with alerting police to a regional human trafficking ring. Three individuals have been arrested and charged with trafficking girls up and down the I-5 corridor, primarily in Tacoma.

Wisconsin

Feb. 27, 2015: Officers responding to a call for help in Weston, Wisconsin, arrested Bee Her on human trafficking and possession of drug paraphernalia charges. He was allegedly offering a woman for sex in exchange for methamphetamines.

Articles of General Interest

In Pitt County, North Carolina, ground has been broken for the nation's first all-male home for sex-trafficked boys. The non-profit, Restore One, is looking to hire a shelter director for Anchor House. The first phase of construction is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2015.

A task force brought together to counter sex trafficking in the Phoenix area during the Super Bowl resulted in more than 400 arrests and the rescue of 30 underage victims from June to January.

The FBI announced that six minors were rescued from commercial sex trafficking before and during the recent National Western Stock Show in Denver. Two traffickers were also arrested.

New software has been developed by a company called Rescue Forensics to help law enforcement officials collect and document online evidence that could be used to prosecute traffickers in court. In addition, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency has developed Memex, currently being designed to fight human trafficking. The ultimate goal is for users to be able to extend the reach of current search capabilities and quickly and thoroughly organize subsets of information based on individual interests.
During the ninth "National Day of Johns Arrests," spearheaded by Cook County, Illinois, Sheriff Thomas Dart, 37 law enforcement agencies arrested 570 Johns and 23 pimps in 17 states. Sixty-eight women and juveniles who were victims of human trafficking were recovered. Of the people arrested, 408 were taken into custody after answering fake ads placed on Backpage.com; another 40 were arrested as a result of fake ads posted on Craigslist.

A new Minneapolis, Minnesota, ordinance regulating massage parlors has led to the closure of a dozen unlicensed establishments. The ordinance requires the paying of a licensing fee and outlines various unlawful acts that could result in a citation or revoked license.

A new study, published in The Lancet Global Health, noted that survivors of trafficking urgently need access to health care and that mental health care is an essential component.

The Urban Institute released a study that explored the experiences of nearly 300 youth, who self-identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered, and noted the severe gaps in services for teens who trade sex for basic needs. In Surviving the Streets of New York, the authors note that existing services for human trafficking victims must be extended to the special needs of the LGBT community.

Polaris released the 2014 data on the calls to the National Human Trafficking Hotline. The hotline received a 26 percent increase in calls directly from human trafficking survivors.