



# Department of Justice

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TESTIMONY

OF

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

BEFORE THE

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
STATE OF MINNESOTA

CONCERNING

INFORMATIONAL HEARING - HUMAN TRAFFICKING

PRESENTED ON

JULY 29, 2008

**United States Department of Justice  
Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking  
2008**

The fight against human trafficking is a priority of the President and the Attorney General of the United States. The Department of Justice has undertaken a comprehensive, robust, and aggressive strategy to fight this terrible crime that includes the infiltration of the dark places of the underground economy, the rescue of victims, and the prosecution of perpetrators. In addition, our work includes comprehensive training, design of proactive investigative methodologies, coordination with multi-disciplinary task forces in 39 U.S. cities, development of partnerships with other federal, state, local, and tribal agencies and with non-governmental organizations, funding of research to better help us understand the nature and scope of the problem of human trafficking, and awarding of grants to victim services organization—all under a concept we call a “victim-centered” approach. The investigators, attorneys, and restorative care providers know that their efforts support the foundational values of our nation: the liberty promised by the Thirteenth Amendment to our Constitution.

At the center of the Department’s efforts in fighting human trafficking is the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA). The TVPA enhanced three aspects of Federal government activity to combat trafficking in persons: protection, prosecution, and prevention. The TVPA provided for a range of new protections and assistance for victims of trafficking in persons; it expanded the crimes and enhanced the penalties available to Federal investigators and prosecutors pursuing traffickers; and it expanded the U.S. Government’s international activities to prevent victims from being trafficked. As part of our outreach to states, we also wrote and disseminated a model state law on trafficking, based on the TVPA that has been adopted in whole in part by more than 30 states.

Modern traffickers prey on United States citizens and foreigners alike, exploiting their vulnerabilities to hold them in such forms of service as forced prostitution, domestic service, and migrant agricultural labor. The evil presented by human trafficking can be found wherever there are vulnerable people who can be exploited by others. Thus, this modern-day form of slavery does not have any geographic or economic boundaries. Employers in urban centers as well as isolated parts of the economy have held workers in bondage through threats and force. Individuals have been exploited and forced to labor in affluent communities as well as in neighborhoods that have pockets of poverty. In short, this is a crime that can occur anywhere, any time, and against any vulnerable person. The victims we have seen include college students coerced into commercial sex in Atlanta, homeless men forced to work as farm laborers in Florida, and individuals with hearing impairments forced to peddle on the New York City subway system.

Consistent with our “victim-centered” approach, law enforcement works very closely with non-governmental service providers, who have expertise in providing much needed services to these vulnerable victims. Many of the groups we work with have a track record of success working with battered immigrant women, migrant workers,

victims of torture, or prostitutes attempting to escape the streets. The federal government assists these groups through funding and technical assistance from the Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime and the Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Refugee Resettlement. We will continue to work together to ensure the victims' safety and housing, to see that their medical and psychiatric needs are taken care of, and to cooperate in normalizing their immigration status to assist the prosecution and to prevent retaliation if they were to return home. This approach is an unprecedented partnership between law enforcement and the non-profit sector. Establishing this relationship before we launch a raid and before we interview victims has enabled us respond to the victims' needs in tandem with these service providers.

Providing restorative care for victims is the right policy in these cases, and the United States leads the world in the generosity of services and immigration relief it provides to the victims of this devastating crime. An added benefit is that without the empowerment that comes from these services, the victims are unable to tell their story and provide evidence of criminal activity. This victim cooperation is essential to a successful prosecution. Without victim cooperation, human traffickers stand a better chance of going free.

The Department's "victim-centered" approach to combating human trafficking has yielded significant results. Nationally, from 2001 to 2007, the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the United States Attorneys prosecuted 156 multi-defendant Trafficking in Persons cases, securing 342 convictions. This represents a seven-fold increase over the previous seven years. These prosecutions have led to sentences as long as life in prison and to millions of dollars in restitution to victims.

DOJ has also worked closely with state and local partners through the establishment of 39 Human Trafficking Task Forces, created and funded by DOJ's Bureau of Justice Assistance. These task forces bring together federal, state, and local law enforcement investigators and prosecutors, along with social services agencies, to find and rescue victims and punish their traffickers.

In addition, since 2003, the Innocence Lost Initiative, a joint federal and state effort implemented through 28 task forces in selected cities, has focused on the investigation of prostituted children. Through this initiative, sponsored by DOJ's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, more than 400 children have been rescued and more than 300 convictions obtained in state and federal court.

Through our work, DOJ has trained 75,000 thousand law enforcement officers and community members to identify this crime. For example, in September of 2007, the Department convened the third National Anti-Trafficking Conference in Chicago, which brought together hundreds of task force members from the 39 DOJ-funded Human Trafficking Task Forces, which include federal, state, and local prosecutors and victim service providers, and the Innocence Lost Initiative Task Forces, which are focused on combating the sexual exploitation of children. The conference resulted in increased

coordination among task forces and expanded capabilities to combat human trafficking. We will hold a similar conference in Atlanta in September of 2008.

Let us turn now to our efforts to combat human trafficking in Minnesota. In May of 2007, 25 people were indicted in federal court in Minnesota for operating 8 brothels in the Twin Cities area and using force, fraud, and coercion to induce women to engage in acts of prostitution. The investigation by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement and local police departments revealed that the victims were subjected to brutal treatment. Many victims were not legally present in the United States and their belongings and identification documents were withheld from them by the accused.

Also in 2007, three men were convicted for trafficking women between Wisconsin and Minnesota, including juvenile females, in order to have them engage in acts of prostitution. The defendants used sexual assault, food deprivation and violence to force the women and girls to engage in commercial sex acts. In an example of the sort of federal-state cooperation we promote, the case was initially investigated by the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office and then prosecuted by the United States Attorney in the District of Minnesota. In April of this year, a federal judge sentenced the principal defendant to nine years in federal prison.

Also, in 2007 a Burnsville, MN man was sentenced to more than twenty years in federal prison for human trafficking offenses. This defendant had transported a 16-year-old female from Minnesota to Iowa, South Carolina, and Texas in order to have her engage in prostitution.

The only way that the Government will continue to succeed in our efforts to eradicate human trafficking is by building partnerships at all levels of government: federal, state, local and tribal. These partnerships are critical to the identification and prosecution of human trafficking crimes where they occur and to restoring the victims of this terrible crime, not only in Minnesota, but also across the country.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this statement on behalf of the Department of Justice.