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Human Trafficking Symposium

*Excerpts of remarks by Rep. Chris Smith (R-Manchester)
Monmouth County Public Safety Center
Freehold, NJ—May 20, 2024*

“Forced labour in the private economy generates \$236 billion in illegal profits per year, a new report ([published on March 19, 2024](#)) from the International Labour Organization (ILO) has found...

“Forced commercial sexual exploitation accounts for more than two-thirds (73 per cent) of the total illegal profits, despite accounting for only 27 per cent of the total number of victims in privately imposed labour...

“These numbers are explained by the huge difference in per victim profits between forced commercial sexual exploitation and other forms of non-state forced labour exploitation – \$27,252 profits per victim for the former against \$3,687 profits per victim for the latter.”

Knowing that more must be done to end these hideous crimes, it’s a special honor and privilege to join Sherriff Shaun Golden, County Prosecutor Raymond Santiago and five amazing leaders in the fight against human trafficking at today’s symposium:

- **Julia Einbond** - CEO of Covenant House NJ.
- **Amanda Leese** - Senior Vice President of Reentry and Navigator Services Volunteers of America Delaware Valley.
- **Chief Christopher J Winters** - Pine Hill Police Department.
- **Andrea Nurko** - Supervisory Special Agent, Agency: Homeland Security Investigation (HSI) Newark.
- **Hillary Evans** - Director of Curriculum and Instruction, 3Strands Global Foundation.

Twenty four years ago, the U.S. Congress approved and the President signed historic bipartisan legislation that I authored—[the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 \(TVPA\)](#)—a comprehensive whole-of-government initiative to combat sex and labor trafficking in the United States and around the world.

The TVPA created a bold new domestic and international anti-human trafficking strategy and established numerous new programs to protect victims, prosecute traffickers and to the extent possible, prevent human trafficking in the first place—the three Ps.

Though it is hard to believe now, the TVPA was met with a wall of skepticism and opposition—dismissed by many as a solution in search of a problem. For most people at that time—including some lawmakers—the term “trafficking” applied almost exclusively to drugs and weapons, not human beings.

Reports of vulnerable persons—especially women and children—being reduced to commodities for sale were often met with surprise, incredulity, or indifference.

My bill was finally signed into law on [October 28, 2000](#), and within a year after enactment no-one was arguing anymore that the Trafficking Victims Protection Act’s integrated three P’s strategy—prevention, protection for victims and prosecution of the traffickers—was flawed, unworkable, unnecessary, or counterproductive.

The TVPA included several “sea change” criminal code reforms including treating as a victim—and not a perpetrator of a crime—anyone exploited by a commercial sex act who had not attained the age of 18 and anyone older where there was an element of force, fraud or coercion.

The TVPA radically reformed the US criminal code to authorize asset confiscation and jail sentences for traffickers of up to life imprisonment.

Thousands of human traffickers have been prosecuted and jailed pursuant to the *Trafficking Victims Protection Act* including [all charges brought against Jeffrey Epstein](#).

According to the [Bureau of Justice Statistics](#) The number of persons prosecuted for human trafficking more than doubled from 2011 to 2021 (from 729 persons to 1,672 persons, respectively).

Among its many other provisions, the *Trafficking Victims Protection Act* also created the [President’s Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons](#), the [U.S. State Department’s Trafficking in Persons Office](#) and [annual TIP Report](#) with its [tier grading](#) of every nation’s record in making “[serious and sustained efforts](#)” to eliminate human trafficking. Those relegated to what we call Tier 3—egregious violators—are subject to sanctions.

Over the years, I've authored four additional laws to combat human trafficking—including in [2003](#), [2005](#), [2016](#)—International Megan's Law—and [2019](#) the Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Act which was signed into law by President Trump.

On February 13th of this this year, the House of Representatives passed another comprehensive bill that I wrote called the [Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Act—H.R. 5856](#).

Specifically, the Federick Douglass Act authorizes \$241 million each year for five years (\$1.205 billion over five years) and:

- Seeks to promote situational awareness training—prevention—on how not to be a victim for both elementary and secondary students and faculty through the Frederick Douglass Human Trafficking Prevention Education Grants. Hillary Evans of 3Strands Global Foundation is empowering young people—800,000 students educated to date—to recognize a potential trafficking situation and take the necessary steps to thwart it. Every school—at all levels and in an age-appropriate manner— must include this training as part of their curriculum!
- Authorizes survivors' employment, housing, and education programs.
- Authorizes a brand new \$175 million over five years program for DOJ Housing Assistance Grants for victims of human trafficking.
- Makes scalable programs through training of the trainers and collaboration with Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force.
- Encourages the usage of prevention efforts to include accessible, age-appropriate, and trauma-informed approaches for USAID beneficiaries and the further incorporation of counter-trafficking efforts across the development portfolio.
- Streamlines statutory language for Tier 2 Watch List.
- Reauthorizes the Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons; and
- Reauthorizes funding for the International Megan's Law and Angel Watch programs.
- Adds forced organ harvesting trafficking as part of the annual TIP Report to expose and fight China and other countries for authorizing or enabling this crime.

In 2008, I first introduced [International Megan's Law](#). It passed the House in [2010](#), [2014](#), [2016](#)—and, thankfully, finally cleared the United States Senate and was signed into law in 2016—eight years later!

Megan Kanka was from Hamilton, New Jersey and was just 7 years old when she was kidnapped, raped, and brutally murdered in 1994. Her assailant lived across the street. Unbeknownst to her family and other residents in the neighborhood, he was a convicted repeat child sex offender.

Megan's heartbroken-to-this-day parents—Maureen and Richard Kanka—have been

amazingly effective in successfully pushing every state in the union including New Jersey to enact Megan's Law.

Why *International Megan's Law*? We know from law enforcement, academia and media documentation that Americans on the U.S. sex offender registries are frequently caught sexually abusing children in Asia, Central and South America, Europe, and, frankly, everywhere.

The inherent secrecy of international travel enables child exploitation.

A deeply disturbing 2010 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that at least 4,500 U.S. passports were issued to registered sex offenders in fiscal year 2008 alone. Typically, a passport is valid for 10 years, meaning some or many of the tens of thousands of registered sex offenders possessing passports may be on the prowl internationally looking to exploit and abuse.

Now, under *International Megan's Law*, convicted child sex offenders who travel abroad must provide notice to the U.S. Government—via the [Angel Watch Center](#)—prior to departure of all planned destinations. Failure to do so carries a significant jail term commensurate with a convicted child sex abuser not reporting to local law enforcement. Upon receipt of the travel itinerary, the U.S. government informs the destination country or countries of those plans.

The destination country or countries are then empowered with actionable information to render the traveler inadmissible.

The law is working as intended. According to Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the U.S. government has notified foreign governments of the planned travel of 27,679 covered sex offenders to their countries. As of late January, 9,489 individuals who were convicted of sex crimes against children were denied entry by these nations.

Concerned that some may fail to include their true destination when filing—and out of an abundance of caution and concern for kids—their passports contain the following message that will not likely go unnoticed by border agents: **“The bearer was convicted of a sex offense against a minor and is a covered sex offender pursuant to 22 United States Code Section 212(b).”**

HSI reports that 14,854 passports were submitted for revocations and/or confirmed requiring the IML endorsement.

The Act also created a new policy of reciprocity—an attempt to get other countries to warn us when a convicted pedophile plans to travel to the United States, empowering us to deny entry.

Finally, at a [congressional hearing](#) I chaired last May, [Gina Cavallo](#)—an amazing, courageous woman who presented last year at this symposium—told us how she suffered unspeakable violence including rape, beatings, coercive drug abuse and other torture as her traffickers sold her like a commodity to one buyer after another.

She testified: “It’s so critical that survivors are heard” and the Frederick Douglass Act is a direct result of listening to her and other human trafficking victims including Bella Hanoukey and Robert Lung.

Gina Cavallo told us that she was “a survivor of domestic violence and childhood abuse. That experience as a child led me to a place where I felt ashamed, unloved, and rejected. It also led me to being trafficked.

“Force, fraud and coercion were all used by someone who pretended to be my friend, but ultimately abducted me into being trafficked. For nearly two years from the age of 18, I was prostituted, and sold to the highest bidder, and raped over and over again.

“My identity was taken as I was given a new name. Sleep-deprivation, threats of violence, pornography, drugs and food were all used as punishment and reward, leading to my traffickers taking psychological control of me.

“Does this sound like anything a young person dreams of for their future? Being stripped and robbed of your mind and body, your humanity, your dignity and respect?

“I became a commodity to be used for others’ gain.

“But I often blamed myself for my situation, because I believed it was my fault.

“As a victim I was taught to distrust family and friends and especially law enforcement. The more they isolated me, the more fear I felt, and the more control they gained, which is very intentional.

“It took decades for me to identify that I was a victim...I learned through counseling and my continuous healing journey that what happened to me wasn’t my fault...

“As a victim, I was left with a lifetime sentence: ruined relationships, addiction, hospital visits, suicide attempts, lack of jobs and education—and also left with shame and fear...”

In her testimony Gina said “But what you especially can do as lawmakers is to ensure that in every aspect of your work to end trafficking you put forward measures mandating widespread survivor-informed and trauma- informed training...

“We need to create a safer country where people can come forward without stigma, to reveal their experiences. No one should feel the double victimization of being trafficked, as well as feeling that they stay silent because of shame, fear, and not feeling safe.”

Today, Gina is a brave survivor with an indomitable spirit. She works in coalitions including the [New Jersey Coalition to End Human Trafficking](#) and speaks to many including school assemblies.