

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
4TH DISTRICT, NEW JERSEY

CONSTITUENT SERVICE CENTERS:
1540 Kuser Road, Suite A9
Hamilton, NJ 08619-3828
(609) 585-7878
TTY (609) 585-3650

108 Lacey Road, Suite 38A
Whiting, NJ 08759-1331
(732) 350-2300

2373 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-3004
(202) 225-3765

<http://chrissmith.house.gov>



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**Labor Trafficking in Troubled Economic Times:
Protecting American Jobs and Migrant Human Rights**

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe
Rep. Chris Smith, Chairman
May 23, 2011

Welcome to today's hearing, part of the Helsinki Commission's ongoing efforts to combat human trafficking in all of its aspects – which go back to June 1999, when I chaired the first Commission hearing on trafficking. Today our attention turns to labor trafficking, a modern-day form of slavery exacerbated by the global economic downturn. As with all forms of trafficking, we must never lose sight of the victim – the truly human face of people caught up unwittingly in this multi-billion dollar criminal enterprise.

Having just participated in a conference: “Building Bridges of Freedom: Public-Private Partnerships to End Modern-Day Slavery,” I am acutely aware that, in order to be successful in combating the scourge of human trafficking, we must strengthen the cooperation between governments and the private sector, particularly with regards to labor trafficking.

Each year tens of thousands of victims are trafficked into the United States from throughout the world. The United States has been at the forefront of efforts to combat human trafficking in all its forms, including labor trafficking, following adoption of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000. Our government has undertaken the vast challenge of tracking slavery around the world. We have developed strategic reporting tools such as the Trafficking in Persons Report; the List of Goods Produced with Child and Forced Labor and the Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, and the world has taken notice.

When I first introduced the Trafficking Victims Protection Act in 1998 – a landmark bill that was signed into law two years later in 2000 – the legislation was met with a wall of skepticism and opposition. People both inside of government and out thought the bold new

strategy that included sheltering, asylum, and other protections for the victims, long jail sentences and asset confiscation for the traffickers, and tough sanctions for governments that failed to meet minimum standards, was merely a solution in search of a problem. I vividly recall raising the trafficking issue at a gathering of parliamentarians meeting in St. Petersburg, Russia in 1999 and being met with a similar reaction.

As the Special Representative for Human Trafficking in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE PA) I note that while considerable progress has been made, I am deeply concerned that of the 56 OSCE participating States, twenty were ranked as Tier 2, with another eight placed on the Tier 2 Watch List.

Our efforts would not have been possible without the invaluable contribution of civil society in the U.S. who have helped us write the law and all subsequent iterations. Last week we heard Deb Cundy of Carlson Companies, which manages numerous hotel chains including Radisson and Country Inns and Suites, explain how their employees were trained to spot a potential trafficking victim and how that employee should notify law enforcement. Christopher Davis of Body Shop International detailed the extraordinary education and awareness program coupled with a petition drive that has garnered approximately 6 million signatures. As we reauthorize certain sections of the Act, which expire at the end of September, civil society representatives have flooded my office – and I'm sure Ambassador CdeBaca's, who was at the Rome conference, has some thoughts today about ways to improve U.S. policy and implementation.

As we all know, traffickers prey upon those in poverty and those lacking even the prospect of a job. I have visited trafficking victim's shelters in countries throughout the world, including Russia, Nigeria, Peru, Romania, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Brazil, Bosnia, Italy and elsewhere. I have seen the faces of victims, women, children and men robbed of their inherent dignity.

In Moldova, Catholic Relief Service's documented that high-school age girls were disappearing into human trafficking in large part due to the extreme lack of job opportunities. CRS created the Moldova Employment and Training Alliance, which encouraged private sector companies to expand in rural villages.

As a destination country, we must recognize that here in our very own backyard, thousands of people are trafficked from all over the world to work on our farms, our hotels, our restaurants and even to serve as our domestic workers. What's even more shocking is that many of these labor migrants enter the country legally through our own immigration system, deceived by their traffickers who sold them a dream.

Indeed, this afternoon we will focus on various aspects of labor trafficking, including abusive and illegal business practices as well as ways to better educate potential migrants of their rights. Among other issues to be considered will be increased education and accountability,

foreign labor recruiting practices and enhancing supply chain transparency. Labor trafficking remains the most prevalent form of human trafficking in the U.S.

U.S. funding for anti-trafficking efforts abroad have brought together labor inspectors, police, prosecutors, NGOs, and faith-based organizations.

Obviously, many major challenges remain. It falls to us – and like-minded people of goodwill everywhere – to meet those challenges head on and wage an unceasing campaign to eradicate human trafficking from the face of the earth.

Today, we are joined by Ambassador Luis C. deBaca, Director of the State Department Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. He is joined by Dr. Gabriela Lemus, the Department of Labor's Representative to the Senior Policy Operating Group on Trafficking in Persons. On our second panel are the Director of the Washington Office of the International Labor Organization, Ms. Nancy Donaldson; Ms. Neha Misra, Senior Specialist on Migration and Human Trafficking for the Solidarity Center and Ms. Julia Ormond, Founder of the Alliance to Stop Slavery and End Trafficking, talented actress and tireless humanitarian activist.

We look forward to your testimonies.