

The Issues: Human Trafficking in Texas

Texas Takes Another Step Forward In The Battle Against Human Trafficking

Human Trafficking in Texas: The Facts

The U.S. State Department estimates that 800,000 men, women and children are trafficked across international borders each year by criminals. It is also estimated that approximately twenty percent of those individuals go through the State of Texas. Also, Houston and El Paso are listed among the "most intense trafficking jurisdictions in the country" according to the U.S. Department of Justice.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, human trafficking is defined as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for one of three purposes:

- Labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.
- A commercial sex act through the use of force, fraud, or coercion.
- Any commercial sex act, if the person is under 18 years of age, regardless of whether any form of coercion is involved.

During the 81st Legislative session, Todd Hunter served as the Chairman of the Judiciary and Civil Jurisprudence committee. While serving as Chairman of the committee, he was shocked to learn of the human trafficking issue currently present within the State of Texas. It quickly became clear that this is an issue that Texas needs to focus on and strive to shutdown in all its forms. During the 82nd Texas Regular Legislative Session, Rep. Hunter filed and passed House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 68, which was signed on June 17, by Governor Rick Perry.

HCR 68 officially requests that the Lieutenant Governor and the Speaker of the House create a joint interim study committee. The committee would be comprised of Texas House and Texas Senate members, who would meet during the interim to investigate and review the issue of human trafficking in the State of Texas. It is important for the State of Texas to take a lead role in combating human trafficking due to the state's large geographical size, busy ports, as well as Texas' location on the U.S./Mexico border along with three other states.

Currently, there are four regions throughout Texas that supply data to the Human Trafficking Reporting System (HTRS). According to the data compiled since 2007, 480 human trafficking victims have been reported in Texas. Out of the 480 victims, 189 were not United States citizens, 220 were Americans being trafficked domestically and 71 were from a country of origin that was unknown.

Federally funded human trafficking taskforces across the country opened over 2,500 suspected cases of human trafficking between 2008-2010. This was based on information entered into the HTRS. Approximately eighty-two percent were cases of suspected incidents which are defined as sex trafficking. Out of the 2,500 suspected incidents, over 1,200 of those incidents involved adults and an excess of 1,000 were allegations of prostitution or sexual exploitation of a child. Eleven percent of the opened cases were classified as labor trafficking.

It is important to know that human trafficking is not exclusive to one segment of society. Human trafficking involves victims of all races, age groups, both males and females and United States citizens, as well as non-citizens. Individuals seeking to force people into human trafficking do not discriminate amongst their victims and often prey upon those who are most vulnerable.

As the discussion of the Human Trafficking issue moves forward, Rep. Hunter will keep South Texas informed. Please do not hesitate to call his offices if you have any questions regarding HCR 68.

State Representative Todd Hunter District 32
Capitol Office, 512-463-0672; District Office, 361-949-4603.

Rep. Hunter represents Aransas, Calhoun, Nueces (Part) and San Patricio Counties.