

**Opening Statement  
Chairman Dan Burton  
Government Reform Committee  
Subcommittee on Human Rights & Wellness  
“Trafficking in Persons: The Federal Government’s Approach to Eradicate this  
Worldwide Problem”  
July 8, 2004**

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The Subcommittee is convening today to once again examine the atrocious practices of human trafficking and slavery around the world, and to discuss how the United States is attempting to combat these illicit practices both domestically, and on an international scale.

The notion that slavery is still practiced in these modern times is nearly unbelievable in most people’s minds. But unfortunately, it remains an all to real and living nightmare for the 27 million people who have fallen victim to some form of slavery, and who represent the highest concentration of slaves in the entirety of human history.

Trafficking in persons is a highly profitable subset of organized crime, accounting for an estimated \$13 Billion in revenues every year to the global economy, \$7 Billion of which is a direct result of the illicit sex trade alone. In addition, human slavery is the third largest form of illegal trafficking, closely trailing the drug trade and illegal gun distribution.

Because of the enormous profitability of this industry, slaveholders will stop at nothing to traffic as many slaves as possible by tricking and victimizing innocent people

into lives of servitude by preying on the most economically disadvantaged members of society. As soon as victims are deprived of the opportunity to return to their homes, they are forced into domestic servitude, sweatshop labor, prostitution, and other types of compulsory labor.

This crisis has affected every nation in some form, including many industrialized and developed nations such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and even the United States. No country is immune from the detriments of these illegal practices.

Although slavery in all its forms was outlawed nearly 130 years ago in the United States, approximately 14, 500 to 17,500 men, women, and children are suspected to be trafficked across American borders every year. While any instances of these horrific crimes are deplorable, this is a relatively low number compared to many other industrialized nations.

Even still, the current Administration, led by President George W. Bush, is not taking these offenses lightly. For the first time in history, the President addressed this problem head-on before the United Nations on September 23, 2003. In his groundbreaking speech, President Bush stated:

“There is a special evil in the abuse and exploitation of the most innocent and vulnerable...Those who created these victims and profit from their suffering must be severely punished. Those who patronize this industry debase themselves and deepen the

misery of others. And governments that tolerate this trade are tolerating a form of slavery”

Under the firm guidance of President Bush, the United States Federal Government has taken many actions to further curb instances of slavery within our own borders. On October 28, 2000, then President Clinton signed into law the “*Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000*” (Public Law 106-386), sponsored by my dear friend and colleague Representative Chris Smith of New Jersey. This groundbreaking legislation has been instrumental in combating human trafficking by supplying the first step toward providing protection to victims of these crimes, as well as strengthening the law with regard to the prosecution of those who perpetrate these illicit activities. The bill also requires the Department of State to submit an annual report to Congress regarding the status of trafficking in persons around the world.

To address the Department of State actions to combat trafficking, as well as to discuss the recently-released *Trafficking in Persons Report*, the Subcommittee has the pleasure of hearing from my former colleague, the Honorable John Miller, Director of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking and former Member of Congress representing the 1<sup>st</sup> District of Washington (1985 – 1993) to speak on these issues.

The *Trafficking Victims Protection Act* not only provided Agencies with tools to further monitor and combat instances of trafficking, but it also gave the necessary resources to provide assistance to the victims of trafficking. Through the Department of

Health and Human Services (HHS), victims and certain family members are eligible for benefits and services such as medical care, refugee cash, and other social services. The Subcommittee is pleased to hear today from the Honorable Christopher Gersten, Principal Deputy Secretary for the Administration for Children and Families at HHS, to inform us of the Agency's programs to assist victims of these horrible crimes and improve the quality of their lives.

In December of last year, Congress passed H.R. 2620, the "*Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2003*," which authorized continued appropriations for Fiscal Years 2004 and 2005 for the *Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000*. In addition to the reauthorization of certain programs, this new law added even more initiatives to the government's anti-trafficking agenda.

Some of the new measures include: further campaigns to combat sex-tourism, harsher punishments for those convicted of trafficking offenses, and expanded eligibility for victims and certain family members for access to further services and funds.

The Act also dictated that the Attorney General must submit an annual report of their activities to combat trafficking to Congress. The first-ever report was released on May 1, 2004. To gain a further perspective on this inaugural report and the Agency's current activities and programs regarding human slavery, the Subcommittee has the pleasure of hearing today from the Honorable R. Alexander Acosta, Assistant Attorney

General in the Civil Rights Division with the Department of Justice, to expound upon these most important intervention issues.

Not only has the Federal Government worked to strengthen its own policies and programs on trafficking, but it has also worked alongside non-governmental organizations (NGO's) to further address this illicit industry, and enhance the quality of life for victims of these crimes. To better understand these relationships, the Subcommittee will receive testimony from Mr. Charles Sung with the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking, also known as CAST. With the assistance of private donors and the Federal Government, CAST has established the first-ever shelter for victims of trafficking in the United States.

In addition to CAST, the Subcommittee will also be hearing this afternoon from Mr. Derek Ellerman with the Polaris Project to discuss their activities on the multi-faceted topic of human slavery. The Subcommittee will also receive testimony from Ms. Michele Clark, Co-Director of the Protection Project at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, to speak on the public policy implications of trafficking in the United States.

As I stated before, trafficking in persons is a human rights tragedy that must be eliminated. President Bush's Administration, the U.S. Federal Government, and NGO's like those with us today, have comprehensively responded to these crimes, and should be congratulated for their work on this most important issue. I certainly hope that these

successes continue, and I look forward to hearing about their latest collective efforts to eliminate the scourge of slavery and human trafficking from the face of the earth.