

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

HUMAN TRAFFICKING ON THE NORTHWEST BORDER
House of Representatives - September 25, 2008

Mr. SALI. Madam Speaker, the country we live in is far too big to see all at once, and many of us have only heard stories of some of its subcultures, hidden treasures, and the uniqueness of thousands of local communities.

One world that some of us never see is the dark world of human trafficking. Because trafficked persons look just like the rest of us, it is a difficult world to perceive. And yet, this underground global economy in persons is thought to involve as much as \$132 billion a year, with profits from its trade reaching over \$200 billion.

This sordid culture, to which most of us are happily blind, crosses all national boundaries, including our own. Perhaps the most widely recognized form is sex trafficking of women into prostitution, but we must also recognize the trafficking of migrant workers, who are often deceived into leaving their homelands into forced, brutal labor without travel documents that give them the identity with which to escape. There is also the forcible use of children to beg for street gangs or work in dangerous conditions, and what I think is the most disgusting, the recent trend of Western tourists engaging in child sex tourism, traveling the world looking for children who are being held in prostitution by their captors.

We like to think that we live in a modern and modernizing world, where barbarism is merely a bad memory. Yet, raw evil persists in our time. Ignoring human trafficking only pulls a shade over an already dark practice. But ignoring it makes it no less real and no less horrifying.

The State Department's 2008 Trafficking in Human Persons Report reveals the truth, but sickens us at the same time. The report quotes one self-justifying American schoolteacher about his child sex tourism, "I'm helping them financially. If they don't have sex with me, they may not have enough food. If someone has a problem with me doing this, let UNICEF feed them."

America is not great because we are perfect or because we refuse to accept injustice when we see it. Child soldiers, 8-year old prostitutes, domestic slavery, this is all real, and you can read about it in the State Department's report. The problem does not go away when we close our eyes, so it is imperative that we open them and act on this problem.

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It's easy to think of this as a Third World problem. The numbers and the brutality are best gazed at from a distance, when we can shake our heads in horror and promptly change the channel to a different station. However, according to the State Department: The U.S. is a destination country for thousands of men, women, and children trafficked largely from East Asia, Mexico, and Central America for the purposes of labor and sexual exploitation. The Trafficking Victims Prevention Act of 2000 has been a great step forward in this fight, its purpose being to punish traffickers, protect victims, and prevent future trafficking.

While the number of prosecutions has gone up and steps clearly have been taken to help the victims, we can make a significant move to prevent trafficking by ensuring that the U.S. is not a destination country. One way to further this goal is to create a Northwest Trafficking Task Force to coordinate these efforts on our Northwestern border, running across Washington, Idaho, and Montana. This thousand-mile border is often patrolled merely on horseback. Without adequate resources, we cannot effectively fight this problem; we must catch it at the border.

We are morally responsible to ensure the God-given dignities of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in this country. We must have the vigilance to keep watch over these freedoms so that no form of human bondage is accepted or ignored.

I humbly ask my colleagues to open their eyes, consider these facts, and stand with me against this horror of human trafficking here at home.