



Human Trafficking News Digest: April 30, 2017

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NBC News

[‘Frederick Douglas’ Bill Introduced in Congress to Curb Human Trafficking](#) (April 27): Members of Congress have introduced a bipartisan bill named for American abolitionist Frederick Douglass that would seek to curb human trafficking. The new legislation, titled the “Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Act of 2017,” is co-sponsored by New Jersey Republican Rep. Chris Smith and California Democrat Rep. Karen Bass. Seven other sponsors have put their support behind the bill, which would reauthorize \$130 million in funding to stop human trafficking and provide aid to victims. In addition to providing tools to U.S. departments to combat the problem, the bill will also provide: Education to susceptible minors, who could be vulnerable to traffickers; incentivize hotels to train staff to spot the signs of trafficking; require airlines to train pilots and flight attendants on spotting trafficking; encourages survivors to work with the government to prevent trafficking. In 2016, nearly 2,000 traffickers were arrested and more than 400 victims were identified, according to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. However, the scope of the problem is hard to quantify due to the silent, pervasive nature of human trafficking. The Department of Homeland Security is unable to keep metrics on human trafficking due to this fact. The bill will be heard before members of the Committee on Foreign Affairs on May 2.

Reuters

[Immigration Expert Predicts Human Trafficking Will Surge Under Trump](#) (April 25): Under tougher anti-immigration policies in the United States under President Donald Trump, human trafficking will “skyrocket,” a top expert warned at a conference on Tuesday. Fear of being deported by U.S. authorities stops people from speaking up about their own or other trafficking cases, said Denise Brennan, professor and chair of the Department of Anthropology at Georgetown University. “Policies that push migrants to live and work in the shadows make the perfect prey for abusive employers,” said Brennan, a keynote speaker at the Trust Conference/America Forum, a one-day Thomson Reuters Foundation event on the fight against slavery and trafficking. Anti-immigrant rhetoric, violence and policies are on the rise around the world, in particular in the United States under Trump, who has vowed to fight illegal immigration and build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, she said. Since becoming president, Trump has issued a temporary visa ban against seven Muslim-majority countries that was later blocked by federal courts, suspended a refugee program and initiated tougher deportation procedures. Up to 12 million people are estimated to be living illegally without documents in the United States. While there are no official law enforcement statistics, in the United States nearly 32,000 cases of human trafficking have been reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline in the last decade. Brennan said there is little genuine political effort made in the United States to find and aid labor trafficking victims. Under a law passed in 2000, 5,000 visas are available each year to trafficking victims, Brennan said. But only between 7,000 to 9,000 such visas have been issued in the past 17 years when the number could have been 85,000, she said.



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The Business Journal

[Juvenile Human Trafficking Court Launching in Fresno County](#) (April 24): Cases of human trafficking involving minors are a growing occurrence in Fresno County courtrooms, so much so that the county court system is working to launch a juvenile human trafficking court. “The court is needed to serve a growing number of youth trafficked throughout Fresno County,” states a press release issued today by the Fresno County Superior Court, which will use a three-year \$383,651 grant from Judicial Council of California to initiate and fund the court. Like drug court, veterans court and mental health treatment court, the juvenile human trafficking court will function as a normal court but will take in juveniles involved in or forced into acts of prostitution and other human trafficking offenses, are victimized in the child welfare system or are at high risk of exploitation. The focus will not be on punishment but rather using court-imposed mental health-treatments programs and support services to help the children recover from the exploitation they endured and keep them out of such situations in the future. Part of the money will be used to augment existing services to identify and serve targeted youths, which will include implementing new technology to automate the system for finding available space in youth shelters, as well as finding community services for youths. Some of the grant also will be used to provide professional education to workers in the court system and related agencies on working with youth who have been victims of human trafficking, funding the newly-created job of service coordinator for the new human trafficking court, providing transportation to youths in the system and cover other costs. Plans are for the new court to start late this year or early next year.

US News & World Report

[The Trafficking Targets](#) (April 21): Researchers on Monday released the most comprehensive findings to date on the prevalence of human trafficking among homeless youth in the United States and Canada, reporting that 1 in 5 have been the victims of human trafficking – involving either the sale of minors for sex, or compelling sex or labor from victims through the use of force, fraud or coercion. The studies from The Field Center at the University of Pennsylvania and Loyola University in New Orleans featured interviews with 911 homeless youth across 13 cities, and bear out for the first time on a large scale the prevalence of human trafficking among homeless youth. Pimps and gangs have been targeting homeless teenagers. That has been true for a long time, and now we can prove it. The central question is what to do about it. In February, President Donald Trump described human trafficking as an “epidemic.” But the president’s 2018 budget request for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development proposes a \$6.2 billion, or 13.2 percent, decrease, which will further erode the safety net for homeless youth in the United States. One of the most effective ways to reduce human trafficking among vulnerable young people is to reduce their vulnerability by ensuring they have a safe place to stay. Too many policymakers from both parties continue to think of trafficked youth and homeless youth as distinct. In many instances, they are the same teenagers, and our efforts to eliminate exploitation must address the circumstances that make them susceptible to it. Ending homelessness among America’s youth is achievable. When Congress invested in



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effective, targeted homeless assistance to veterans over the last seven years, the nation witnessed an eye-popping 47 percent reduction in veteran homelessness from 2010 to 2016, including a remarkable 17 percent reduction in 2015 alone. Chronic homelessness also decreased 27 percent when Congress prioritized it, and family homelessness dropped by 23 percent, with a 65 percent drop in families living on the street. But in the past three years, the number of unaccompanied homeless youth in the United States rose. The National Network for Youth estimates at least 1 million youth experience one night of homelessness each year, and more than 550,000 youth are homeless for a week or longer.

New York Times (blog)

[Homeless Youth at High Risk of Human Trafficking](#) (April 17): For decades, one set of activists and legislators have fought to end human trafficking, while a different set have worked tirelessly to try to end homelessness. Activists and legislators have rarely teamed up to fight the two issues simultaneously. Now a new study suggests that the key to ending trafficking of young people is to eradicate youth homelessness first. The study was released on Monday by Covenant House, as well as the Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & Research at the University of Pennsylvania and Loyola University Modern Slavery Research Project in New Orleans. After interviewing 911 homeless young people across 13 cities in the United States and Canada, researchers concluded that 56 percent of homeless transgender youth had been involved in the sex trade in some way, while 40 percent of homeless young women and 25 percent of young men were. About 27 percent of L.G.B.T youth reported experiences consistent with the U.S. federal definition of sex trafficking. The researchers found that of those interviewed, nearly one-fifth of homeless youth in the United States and Canada are victims of human trafficking, including those trafficked for sex, labor, or both. Some 20 percent were victims of human trafficking.

Orlando Sentinel

[Man Charged with Human Trafficking, Forced Teen to Pick Blueberries, Deputies Say](#) (April 12): A 28-year-old Hillsborough County man was arrested on a charge of human trafficking after deputies discovered he was forcing a teenager to work as repayment for bringing her into the country, the Lake County Sheriff's Office said today. Deputies received a call from the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement on Tuesday for a well-being check on a juvenile in Leesburg, sheriff's Lt. John Herrell said. "As deputies spoke with the 17-year-old victim she informed them that Mr. Carlos Garcia-Diaz was forcing her to work picking blueberries to pay off the debt for bringing her into the country illegally," Herrell said. The teenager told deputies that she had crossed into Arizona from Mexico about one year ago. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is involved with the case and the teenager was turned over to the state Department of Children and Families.



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Sun Sentinel

[South Florida Teens Victimized by Human Trafficking, Officials Warn](#) (April 12): Human trafficking that ends with teens in sexual slavery is on the rise in South Florida, experts said Wednesday, warning that every family – regardless of income, education or location – could become a victim. The chilling warning came from people who work in government, social services and the legal system. They were convened for a closed-door analysis of the problem and potential solutions by U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, D-Weston. “No matter where you are from, no matter your walk of life, understand: Your child can be a victim,” Wasserman Schultz said later at a news conference. “Every family is potentially vulnerable because too many families don’t know what’s going on in their child’s head. We all have to stop tuning this stuff out as something that happens to other people’s kids.” In 2016, calls reporting suspected trafficking victims in Broward totaled 156, said Jumorrow Johnson, a vice president of the Broward Human Trafficking Coalition. In 2012, she said, there were just 92 reports. Human trafficking is increasing in numbers – and the children who are ensnared are increasingly coming from children living in families and less from children in the foster care system, Johnson said. In 2012, 51 percent of the cases involved children living in communities with families. By last year, that was up to 83 percent. Palm Beach County doesn’t have the same kind of statistics, said Dr. Heidi Schaeffer, vice president of the Human Trafficking Coalition of the Palm Beaches and an officer with the Broward Human Trafficking Coalition. For the first 11 months of 2016, she said a state child abuse hotline received 96 trafficking calls involving Palm Beach County. The number could be higher once more investigations are completed. Schaeffer said sex trafficking is the subject that gets the most attention. “This isn’t just about sex. This is also people who are literally working as slaves. People still exist as slaves today,” she said in a telephone interview. “They’re doing roofs and they’re your nannies that never get to go home and they’re housekeepers in hotels.

Reuters

[Human Trafficking Risks to LGBTQ People Poorly Understood: Campaigner](#) (April 7): The risks of human trafficking to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people is poorly understood despite evidence of exploitation via webcams and other technology, the head of an anti-slavery group, Polaris, said on Thursday. Polaris analyzed data from 40,000 likely cases of human trafficking and labor exploitation based on calls to a national U.S. hotline since 2007 and split these into 25 types of slavery. The analysis found a “surprising” number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people had been exploited in sexual acts through webcams and other technology, said Polaris’s Chief Executive Bradley Myles. Polaris found out of 78 cases reported in the “remote interactive sexual acts” category in its report, a “surprising” 12 percent involved the LGBTQ community, mostly as victims. Although the number of such cases is small, it warrants more research because the rate is higher than the two to five percent of LGBTQ cases commonly found in other types of human trafficking, said Myles. Myles said he hoped Polaris’ move to introduce more categories identifying different types of trafficking would also help sexual minorities to be better protected. Homelessness among sexual minorities, particularly among young-



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sters, is likely to contribute to the problem, said Myles. A high number of homeless young people in the United States identify as being LGBTQ, studies have shown, although exact figures are not available.

St. Louis Public Radio

[Missouri AG Proposes Rules to Prevent Human Trafficking](#) (April 3): Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley wants to get tough on human trafficking, which long has been a problem in the state. To do so, he proposed rules Monday that could make it easier to charge human traffickers with a crime. The Republican wants to use consumer protection laws to establish penalties for doing things like using a business as a front for trafficking or forcing someone to work for free to pay off a debt. Luring someone to Missouri with the promise of a job could also be prosecuted, he said. Hawley's office also plans to set up a statewide enforcement unit and a task force to coordinate law enforcement and victim services. Missouri is among the top 20 states in the nation in the number of cases of human trafficking reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline. In 2016, 135 cases were reported in Missouri — almost double the year before. Last week, federal authorities arrested two men in a brothel raid in Columbia, Missouri, and charged them with promoting prostitution online.