Selected State Attorney General Initiative on Human Trafficking

Many thanks to Sarah Spruce, Esq. for her work in creating this resource guide.

California

In 2005, the California legislature passed an anti-trafficking law that made human trafficking a state felony. The law also directs the California Attorney General to make human trafficking priority and established the California Alliance to Combat Trafficking and Slavery task force, which is chaired and administered by the California Attorney General’s Office. The task force must present a report on the problem to the Attorney General, Governor, and Legislature after collecting data on the nature and extent of trafficking in California and examining collaborative models, available resources for victims, and existing state criminal statutes, among other tasks. The task force released the report on Human Trafficking in California in 2007.

Links

Human Trafficking in California Report:

Florida

In 2004 Florida passed a law making human trafficking of minors for sexual activities a felony and classifies human trafficking in general as racketeering. According to the state Attorney General at the time it was enacted, this law would allow the Florida Attorney General’s Office of Statewide Prosecution to actively pursue human traffickers in the state. The Florida Attorney General’s office is also a member of the Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking, which provides services to human trafficking victims, helps train law enforcement officers to recognize the signs of human trafficking, and assists some law enforcement agencies with investigations.

Links

Florida Attorney General Human Trafficking page:
http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/initiatives/humantrafficking/

Message from Florida Attorney General Bill McCollum:
http://www.myfloridalegal.com/NewsBrie.nsf/OnlineBrief/01A7EFE18B8E6A26852572DF006CF3BC
Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking:  
http://www.stophumantrafficking.org/index.html

Massachusetts

In January 2011, Massachusetts Attorney General Martha Coakley, along with state legislators, filed a bill with the state legislature that would criminalize human trafficking. The legislation, known as “An Act Relative to the Commercial Exploitation of People,” would make human trafficking for sex or forced labor a crime in Massachusetts, impose higher penalties for offenses involving minors, create an interagency task force led by the Attorney General, and increase penalties for existing prostitution laws to bring down demand. The bill is pending before the state Senate and House as of this time.

Links

Massachusetts AGO Human Trafficking page:  
http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=cagoterminal&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Community+Safety&L2=Anti+Human+Trafficking+Initiative&sid=Cago&b=terminalcontent&f=victim_human_trafficking&csid=Cago

“An Act Relative to the Commercial Exploitation of People” Press Release:  

“An Act Relative to the Commercial Exploitation of People” House Legislative Status:  
http://www.malegislature.gov/Bills/187/House/H03483

“An Act Relative to the Commercial Exploitation of People” Senate Legislative Status:  
http://www.malegislature.gov/Bills/187/Senate/S00827

New Mexico

In 2008, the New Mexico Attorney General’s Office drafted and introduced a bill to the state legislature making human trafficking a criminal offense in the state, which the legislature passed. The legislation included increased penalties for offenses involving minors, made victims eligible for state funds until they qualified for federal benefits and services, and established a human trafficking task force coordinated by the Border Violence Division (BVD). The BVD has established 13 regional work groups to share information and collaborate with entities across the state. The New Mexico Attorney General’s Office has also published documents relating to human trafficking, including a training manual for law enforcement on the new legislation.
Ohio

In August 2011, Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine relaunched a commission on human trafficking in Ohio. This commission is building on the work of the former Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray and shifting focus from reports on the problem of human trafficking to helping law enforcement develop ways to combat human trafficking. The Ohio Attorney General’s office says it is helping to educate law enforcement on the signs of human trafficking and investigating human trafficking. The Ohio Attorney General’s page on human trafficking links to several publications, including reports on prevention in the state, a year-end report, and recommendations for changes to state laws.

Texas

In 2009, the Texas legislature created the Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force to combat the problem of human trafficking in Texas. Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott is the presiding officer of this task force and is responsible for administration and providing staff and facilities for the task force, whose mission is to develop policies to prevent human trafficking and make recommendations to strengthen state and local efforts to curb the problem by increasing collaboration, develop systematic data collection on human trafficking incidents in the state, develop comprehensive training for law enforcement and others, and enact public awareness campaign. The task force has also established several work groups and published reports on their activities and recommendations for the legislature.

Links


Ohio Attorney General Human Trafficking page: http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/HumanTrafficking.aspx/?from=nav


Texas

In 2009, the Texas legislature created the Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force to combat the problem of human trafficking in Texas. Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott is the presiding officer of this task force and is responsible for administration and providing staff and facilities for the task force, whose mission is to develop policies to prevent human trafficking and make recommendations to strengthen state and local efforts to curb the problem by increasing collaboration, develop systematic data collection on human trafficking incidents in the state, develop comprehensive training for law enforcement and others, and enact public awareness campaign. The task force has also established several work groups and published reports on their activities and recommendations for the legislature.
Vermont

In 2009, the Vermont General Assembly passed “An Act Relating to Human Trafficking,” which created the Human Trafficking Task Force and designated the Vermont Attorney General as the Chair. Since being formed, the task force has held meetings and heard testimony from victim advocates, federal authorities, experts, and may others. They also distributed surveys to service providers for victims and families, emergency rooms, and non-profits across the state on human trafficking. The task force also distributed surveys to at-risk youth in Vermont.

In January 2011 the task force issued the report required by the legislature on human trafficking in Vermont and gave recommendations for the legislature to combat human trafficking, including a statute criminalizing human trafficking in Vermont.

Links


Washington

According to the Washington Attorney General Office’s website, in 2003 Washington was the first state to pass a law criminalizing human trafficking. The law made human trafficking a felony, but by 2008 there were no known charges under the law. In 2008, Attorney General Rob McKenna became active. He directed the Attorney General’s Office to hold a roundtable on human trafficking among law enforcement, legislators, and social services leaders. The office is continuing these roundtables to work on the issue with such programs as a CLE class on human trafficking and attempting to schedule a Human Trafficking Awareness Month.

When McKenna became President of the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG) in June of 2011, he launched the “Pillars of Hope: Attorneys General Unite Against Human Trafficking” as the NAAG Presidential initiative. The program is built on four pillars: Data collection and analyzing current state laws and tools; prosecuting traffickers; rescuing victims; and public awareness campaigns. Recently a coalition of Attorneys General, led by McKenna, lobbied for Backpage.com to remove their escort section, which they say is a hotbed for human trafficking activity.

Links
Washington AGO human trafficking website:
http://www.atg.wa.gov/HumanTrafficking.aspx


Pillars of Hope: http://www.atg.wa.gov/NAAG/Pillars.aspx

Attorneys General ask Craigslist to remove section:

Attorneys General ask Backpage.com:
http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/localnews/2016066045_backpage01m.html