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Contact: Andrea Austin
Office: (202) 745-1001x122
Cell: (202) 425-2307
Email: AAustin@PolarisProject.org

Nevada Governor Signs Legislation Cracking Down on Child Sex Trafficking

Carson City, NV, May 26, 2009 - Nevada Governor Jim Gibbons signed legislation into law last Friday targeting human traffickers and pimps who exploit children in prostitution – bringing Nevada law more in line with other western states.

Assemblyman John Hambrick (R, 2), a former law enforcement officer and Assemblyman Bernie Anderson (D, 31) introduced this bi-partisan legislation in response to witnessing the many children grossly exploited and subject to violence in the sex trade. In May of 2007, outreach workers identified over 400 prostituted children on the streets of Nevada alone, and while the use of children in prostitution is a severe form of human trafficking under federal law, it still remains rampant. In the U.S. uncountable child victims are trapped in pimp-controlled street prostitution or sold on the internet, with no hope of escape. Victims face a horrific life in which they are repeatedly threatened, beaten, raped, starved, or psychologically tortured. These crimes are committed for one reason: the financial profit of traffickers.

The newly enacted law improves Nevada's response to trafficking by adding severe financial penalties - and risk - to the crime of prostituting a child, while providing a funding mechanism to prevent and prosecute the crime. "The new law targets traffickers' greatest motivation – their profits," stated Hambrick, "and clearly demonstrates that we mean business." The new law provides for criminal fines of up to \$100,000 for a person convicted of prostituting a child between the ages of 14 and 18, and fines of up to \$500,000 if the child is under 14. The assets of those convicted may also be forfeited and directed to law enforcement and to organizations working to end the sex trafficking of minors. The new fines are more in line with Nevada's neighboring state of Arizona and several other western states that have sent a strong message to traffickers that exploitation will not be tolerated.

According to Hambrick, "this new law is but a first step in cracking down on the malicious and insidiously cruel crime of human trafficking in Nevada, and I look forward to even more comprehensive reforms in the next session." Human trafficking is the modern day practice of slavery and it is the fastest growing criminal industry in the world, generating over \$36 billion annually. Victims of human trafficking in the U.S. are children and adults, and both foreign nationals and U.S. citizens, who are subjected to force, fraud, and coercion for sexual or labor exploitation.

Ambassador Mark Lagon, Executive Director at Polaris Project commented, "We commend Nevada legislators, advocates, and Governor Gibbons for addressing this critical need. We look forward to Nevada authorities -- in concert with non-governmental organizations -- taking even greater steps next

year to end human trafficking of both minors and adults, by implementing greater penalties against traffickers and improving protections for victims.”

Polaris Project is the leading organization in the U.S. working on all forms of human trafficking and serving both U.S. citizens and foreign national victims, including men, women, and children. Polaris Project's programs form a holistic approach to create both short-term and long-term solutions. We leverage our on-the-ground experience helping survivors into a comprehensive strategy to provide victim services, inform and empower the public, train law enforcement and service providers, advocate for better state and federal laws, operate the National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline (1-888-3737-888), and strengthen the movement to end modern slavery.

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