

quickly, it will be here for some time. It is growing, and it must be eradicated.

Law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and nonprofit groups such as Alamance for Freedom in my own Sixth Congressional District of North Carolina are on the front lines of this battle, and they are pleading for our help. Here in Congress, we hear your voices. Most importantly, we hear the voices of those trapped in this evil, modern-day slavery.

There is an immediate need for training that will enable officers and agents to identify and rescue victims of human trafficking.

Last week, I introduced my first bill, H.R. 460, the Human Trafficking Detection Act of 2015. This bipartisan legislation works to effectively train and inform the Department of Homeland Security personnel to better detect and intercept human traffickers and their victims.

We took an oath a few weeks ago promising to protect the people of this great country. I am convinced that part of this high calling is to protect those who are victims of human trafficking. Our President even says that the fight against human trafficking is one of the greatest human rights causes of our time, and the United States will continue to lead it. Well, now is the time to lead.

This bill will provide the very necessary training skills in identifying victims of human trafficking as they enter and move about across this country. It is not a final step, but an important one that can immediately save these precious individuals from years of abuse. Let us do so with boldness, courage, and an unflinching dedication to those who need us the most.

Mrs. WAGNER. I thank Congressman WALKER for his leadership, and congratulations on your first piece of legislation—it is so very important—that you will be bringing forward tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure for me to cosponsor with the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Mrs. NOEM) this Special Order on human trafficking. I look forward tomorrow to a number of bills that are going to pass in this United States House of Representatives. I look forward to speaking tomorrow on the SAVE Act that will go after advertisers of this hideous and heinous crime.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to yield back the remainder of my time so the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Mrs. NOEM) may speak. She has been a friend and a partner on the issue of human trafficking since her time in Congress. She has been a real partner to me as we moved this legislation forward. We were able to move, as I said, five pieces of legislation last Congress and will be moving 12 tomorrow with her leadership and support on this very, very important issue. She has a wonderful piece of legislation, H.R. 350, the Human Trafficking Prevention, Intervention, and Recovery Act of 2015.

I am a proud cosponsor and look forward to its passage tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. REICHERT. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to condemn the horrific tragedy of human trafficking. Globally, there are 20.9 million people who have been trafficked. Not one U.S. State has been spared—sadly men, women and children in every state have been victimized. This is not just a global problem, it is an American problem and it is right here in our own backyards.

I witnessed this problem first hand while working in Washington State for the King County Sheriffs Office. All too often, I spoke to young girls on the street one day, urging them to get off the streets, and the next they had disappeared. This was allowed to happen for far too long, because for many of us, these girls and even many boys are invisible. We do not want to see the problem and so we too often choose to look the other way and pretend it isn't real—not in our communities.

We have to make the problem—and the solutions—visible. Last year, I introduced and passed legislation which became law that helped—will help—prevent the sex trafficking of youth in foster care. The children in federal and state care are often the most vulnerable to becoming trafficking victims. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited children, as many as 6 in 10 of the young women forced into selling their bodies on the streets are current or former foster children. I was honored to have been able to lead the efforts to change that reality last Congress. I stand today to join my colleagues in continuing to raise awareness and pledge my commitment to keeping up the fight on behalf of our children and working to enact additional legislation to end human trafficking.

This week, we will vote on legislation sponsored by Congresswomen WAGNER, ELLMERS and NOEM, Congressman PAULSEN, JOHNSON and POE and many others which will go a long way towards preventing the trafficking of countless men, women, boys and girls. This is a fight we must all be in together. We must all join with our colleagues, with law enforcement, and with those who are dedicated to ending human trafficking across the globe to say “no more”.

COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Mrs. NOEM) will control the remainder of the hour as the designee of the majority leader.

Mrs. NOEM. Mr. Speaker, human trafficking is a real problem, and it is happening right here in America. It is not just happening overseas. And whether you live in a State like mine of South Dakota or in New York City, it is impacting every single State in our country, right in our backyards.

The first step to recovery is admitting you have a problem, and boy, do we have a problem. I am thrilled that we have so many Members here to speak on this important issue, not only the problems we are having, but what we are doing this week to address those here in this country, to give as many

tools to our law enforcement officers to make sure that we address the problems we are seeing on our streets every single day and protect as many children and victims as possible.

I would like to yield now to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOHO). He has been extremely active in the fight to end human trafficking through legislation on Capitol Hill as well as through community engagement at his home in Florida. In his district, Congressman YOHO has brought together representatives from Homeland Security, from local police and sheriff's offices, and State's attorneys for roundtable summits to raise awareness and develop best practices for ending human trafficking in Florida.

Mr. YOHO. Mr. Speaker, I thank my distinguished colleague from the great State of South Dakota.

I rise in solidarity with the growing coalition that is united in the global fight against human trafficking. The numbers are overwhelming. We have all heard the estimates of over 22 million people being trafficked worldwide; sometimes, though, they seem far away. People often say: That kind of stuff doesn't happen here. It happens overseas. It doesn't happen right here.

No, Mr. Speaker, this is happening in our own backyards. There is an estimate of over 1 million teenagers running away every year in the United States. Runaways are most at risk and vulnerable to trafficking. In fact, runaways are typically picked up and pimped out or trafficked within the first 48 hours.

Just 5 days ago in my home State of Florida, a 15-year-old girl was discovered by police in a motel being sexually abused and trafficked several times a day. Her parents had been handing out missing child flyers in the neighborhood. Luckily, someone recognized her picture from an online ad and contacted authorities. That young girl went from being a runaway to a trafficking victim in less than a month.

That precious 15-year-old child could have been anybody's child. It could have been yours or mine. However, it is not just runaways that become victims of trafficking. Traffickers don't discriminate based on economic class, race, gender, or age. Traffickers are motivated by profit, solely profit.

The average cost of a slave worldwide is roughly \$90. Human trafficking is a \$30-plus billion industry, and it is the second largest source of revenue for terrorists around the world. As the world's fastest growing criminal enterprise, it is shocking how little people know about this horrendous practice. Furthermore, it is appalling how little is put forward in effort to stop it.

This week, the House of Representatives will pass a series of bills designed to streamline law enforcement resources, toughen penalties for offenders, and provide resources to victims. I commend the sponsors of these bills as well as all Members up here today who are willing to stand up and say enough

is enough. Human trafficking is not a Republican or Democrat issue. Taking a stand against trafficking is something we all must do, remembering that, while January is National Human Trafficking Awareness Month, we must all be vigilant and active in our fight.

No, Mr. Speaker, your neighborhood and my neighborhood are not immune. No city is exempt, and these victims are part of our daily lives, quietly suffering with almost nowhere to turn. We cannot in good conscience continue our daily routines without making every effort to stamp out the practice of forced labor, domestic servitude, and sex trafficking.

I encourage all Americans to go to the Department of Homeland Security's Web site and watch the Blue Campaign video to become familiar with the common signs of human trafficking. Let's all work to stamp out this scourge of activity on humanity.

Mrs. NOEM. I thank the gentleman for being involved in the issue and working so hard to protect as many victims as possible across the country.

I now yield to the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. HARTZLER). Last year, Congresswoman HARTZLER held a human trafficking summit in Columbia, which was one of her most successful events that she did all year. Additionally, she held a foster care listening session with Congresswoman BASS where they also listened to concerns regarding foster youth and how human trafficking does impact our children who are involved in foster care.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate Representative NOEM's leadership on this and the opportunity to share tonight how horrific this crime is and how we must unite and stand together to put an end to it.

With almost 21 million victims globally and more than 293,000 American youth at risk of sexual commercial exploitation and trafficking each year, this heinous crime must be stopped. This week, I am proud to work with my colleagues to vote on legislation that will take steps to do just that.

Tonight I would like to share the story of an amazing woman in my district that I had the privilege of meeting last year. Misty, a survivor of human trafficking, was first trafficked at the age of 14, and it would be 16 more years before she would finally escape a world in which she was brutally beaten and tortured regularly to keep her submissive. When she was severely injured 5 years ago, she thought she was going to die and was too tired to go on anymore. It was then that she agreed to go with a kind police officer who found her that day to get some help.

There aren't words to adequately describe the strength and courage of this woman who testified against her trafficker; who, thankfully, because of Misty's testimony this fall, was found guilty of all charges. Despite the horrific conditions Misty had to endure, she willingly shares her story with oth-

ers and says her experience motivates her to help others who have been in similar situations. It is women like Misty who inspire me to fight against this scourge in our society. It is a crime against humanity, and it must be stopped.

Mrs. NOEM. I thank the gentlewoman for being involved in the issue and for telling the stories that so many of us need to hear. It is when you hear these stories that truly your heart is impacted to where you can't let it go, where you start to work day in and day out to do all that you can to make sure that we have the tools necessary to stop this industry.

I turn next to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), who is a longtime advocate for human rights and for the alleviation of human suffering. He is the sponsor of International Megan's Law, which cracks down on the practice of sex tourism. He is also sponsor of the Human Trafficking Prioritization Act, which will make sure that our government gives human trafficking the top priority it deserves in our diplomacy with other countries.

With that, I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I thank Mrs. NOEM for yielding and for the leadership that she has demonstrated, along with Congresswoman WAGNER. As Judge POE said, women of our caucus have stood up and are leading the fight to combat human trafficking with a zero tolerance policy.

This is an historic week in the House as we seek to pass 12 bills to fight human trafficking. As the prime author of the landmark Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 as well as reauthorizations of that law in 2003 and 2005, I believe the bills under consideration by the House today and tomorrow will further prevent horrific crimes of human trafficking, protect and assist victims, and aid the prosecution of those who exploit and abuse.

A special thanks to our Republican leadership, especially Conference Chair CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS and Majority Leader KEVIN MCCARTHY, who have made this a priority for the House. Hopefully, it will be extended to the Senate, and the President will follow that lead.

When I first introduced TVPA, Trafficking Victims Protection Act, in 1998, the legislation was met with a wall of skepticism and opposition. People both inside of government and out thought the bold new legislation that included sheltering, asylum, and other protections for the victims, long jail sentences and asset confiscation for the traffickers, and tough sanctions for governments that failed to meet minimum standards was merely a solution in search of a problem.

□ 1815

Mr. Speaker, for most people at the time, the term "trafficking" applied almost exclusively to illicit drugs or weapons. Reports of vulnerable per-

sons, especially women and children, being reduced to commodities for sale were often met with surprise and credulity or indifference. It took 2 years and numerous congressional hearings to overcome opponents and muster the votes for passage.

Now, according to the ILO, approximately 21 million people are victimized. Some put the number as high as 36 million subjected to modern-day slavery. The ILO also says that traffickers make profits in excess of \$150 billion a year.

We do have a tier system. We have a trafficking office, an Ambassador at Large; we have a robust effort on the State level. Many States have passed laws that mirror what we have done on the Federal level, so that there are more tools in the tool box to put these traffickers behind bars and to liberate the women and children.

For the past 15 years, we have seen progress on a number of anti-trafficking fronts, including laws, over 300 laws around the world to combat trafficking; and an estimated 125,000 victims have been rescued worldwide.

We also, over the past decade, have had federally funded some 42 anti-human trafficking task forces and 85,000 law enforcement officers have been trained; still, there are still far too little prosecutions and far too few liberations of those who have been trafficked.

The best estimates available now are that there are at least 100,000 American children, mostly runaways. The average age of initial enslavement is 13 years old. Let me say that again: 13-year-old girls are exploited in the commercial sex industry each year.

These children, when found, are often unnecessarily charged for prostitution, fined or put in juvenile detention, when there are other options available. They need to be protected, not prosecuted.

Again, I want to thank our leadership for making this such a high priority. This is modern-day slavery. I thank my good friend and colleague for her leadership. We have got to end modern-day slavery.

Mrs. NOEM. I thank the gentleman for his continued leadership on this issue. For years, he has invested time and effort and heart and soul into protecting as many victims as possible, and for that, we will always be grateful.

I want to yield to the good Representative from Minnesota (Mr. PAULSEN). Representative PAULSEN has been a longtime defender of the victims of human trafficking. In fact, in 2006, when he was a member of the Minnesota Legislature, he was the author of legislation that would form the first statewide human trafficking task force.

That task force was the first step toward Minnesota's safe harbor law. The legislation that he will have here on the floor this week is modeled after that on a Federal level, and I certainly appreciate his time and investment in

protecting as many children and victims as possible.

I yield to Representative PAULSEN.

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlelady for yielding, and I want to thank her for her leadership, along with Representative WAGNER, in coordinating and drawing attention to what this horrific crime truly is, spending a little bit of time on the House floor.

When you hear the words “sex trafficking” and “human trafficking,” a lot of people just think this is something that happens in faraway countries, that it doesn’t happen in the United States. It is very sad to say that it is happening right here in our own backyards, knowing that these traffickers are exploiting young girls for their own financial gain, right in our own communities.

We are talking about 12-, 13-, and 14-year-old young girls. It is pretty hard to imagine, but it is true. It is happening in our cities. It is happening in our suburbs. It is happening in rural towns. I will say I realize how critical it is now to educate our community about what I have learned from actually speaking and talking with some of these victims.

I remember speaking with Deyanna. Deyanna is age 13. She tells the story about how, within days of meeting this so-called boyfriend, she finds herself in Philadelphia, in Chicago, being trafficked and has the wherewithal to escape with her life.

Then I meet the mother of another young girl who was violently raped and murdered this last February. The only good news I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, is that the Twin Cities, which is home now to Minneapolis, being number 13 in the level of sex trafficking, human trafficking that occurs, is also home to many leaders now in the fight against human trafficking.

Over the last 2 years, I have met with great leaders that are inspiring the community to make a difference and pass model legislation that is now being replicated across the country.

I think of Vednita Carter at Breaking Free. I think of Grant Snyder who is a Minneapolis police sergeant who was the very first officer in Minneapolis that was dedicated to working with trafficking victims; and now, he leads his department in teaching local law enforcement, both in Minnesota and in other States around the country, about how to build trust and better relationships with at-risk youth.

We have also got our county attorneys like John Choi, who has been leading the fight, getting top convictions now for a lot of these abusers.

The nonprofit community has been topnotch as well, with Catholic Charities, Brittany’s Place, the Harriet Tubman Center, and the Family Partnership all making a difference.

It does give you hope, Mr. Speaker, that such a large and passionate group of people now are working together to put an end to this modern-day slavery, so the message is spreading.

I will tell you this: we need more safe harbor laws. We need them. Minnesota became the fifth State in the country to approve safe harbor legislation. That means we are essentially treating these children as victims, giving them the services they need and not treating them as criminals. That is really critical.

After the safe harbor legislation went into effect in Minnesota, guess what? We started arresting more johns than ever before. Trafficking convictions more than doubled. It is time that we bring what is working in Minnesota to the national level as well.

I know tomorrow we are going to be voting on this legislation to have this safe harbor legislation that I have authored pass with bipartisan support. A number of other legislation will pass with bipartisan support.

The good news, as the gentlewoman knows, is this is about saving lives, and we are going to make a difference.

Mrs. NOEM. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his work on establishing safe harbor laws. Truly, what they do is that they make sure the victims are not prosecuted, that they are treated like the victims that they truly are.

It is so important that we get his bill passed tomorrow, along with my bill and the other bills that will be coming to the floor. A lot of time and effort has been put into these to make sure that they are right, that they give the tools to our law enforcement officers to make sure that this industry is ended as soon as possible.

I now would like to turn to the gentleman from Minnesota, Representative EMMER. He is from Minnesota’s Sixth Congressional District and is a member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs’ Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations; and the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere.

As part of his responsibility through his committee work, Mr. EMMER works closely with the committee to oversee Federal agencies, international organizations, and NGOs to discuss and to improve governmental responses to human trafficking.

With that, I yield to the Representative from Minnesota.

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues, Congresswoman KRISTI NOEM and Congresswoman ANN WAGNER, for their leadership here tonight.

Nearly a year ago, Boko Haram terrorists in Nigeria kidnapped more than 200 teenage girls with the intent of selling them off into slavery. This crime against humanity sparked international outrage, but a distracted world soon turned their attention and their backs on these young women.

Unfortunately, this was not an isolated tragedy in some faraway nation. We are in the midst of a global crisis. On every continent and in every nation, millions of human beings are sold and enslaved, forced into labor and prostitution against their will.

In the United States alone, hundreds of thousands are trafficked by transnational drug cartels and criminal organizations. The Justice Department estimates there are more than 200,000 children across the U.S. at risk of trafficking.

Human trafficking is a \$30 billion per year enterprise, with thousands trafficked annually. This is not just an American problem, but there is work that we can do at home to combat this growing problem.

Congress must do everything within its power and authority to ensure that resources and judicial tools are being used to improve prosecutions, protect victims, and prevent future trafficking. Thankfully, we are not starting with nothing.

One way we can combat trafficking is through safe harbor laws that have been instituted across the country, including my home State of Minnesota. I would like to thank my colleague, Senator AMY KLOBUCHAR, for her leadership on protecting victims and assisting prosecutors by forwarding safe harbor laws at the national level.

Her leadership, with the support of countless others—including especially my colleagues JOHN KLINE and ERIC PAULSEN—comes from an ongoing effort from everyday Minnesotans looking to make an impact and rescue young men and women trapped in the sex trade.

There is also an existing network of organizations that provide services to victims of trafficking that are both life altering and lifesaving.

In my district, three such organizations stand out. Breaking Free and Heartland Girls’ Ranch help women escape sexual exploitation through housing, mental health support, and education. The Link, in Carver County, provides support programs to youth and families to combat homelessness and works with at-risk children to help them reach their full potential.

Organizations like these are vital in the fight against trafficking. They make a real difference, and their efforts should be celebrated.

Congress will take important votes tomorrow to streamline agency processes and responses, improve the effectiveness of grant awards, and expand the scope of outreach and child protection initiatives.

To our collective shame, the tragedy of human trafficking persists. The words spoken tonight and the votes cast in this Chamber tomorrow cannot merely be symbolic gestures. They must be followed by action and constant vigilance. Our children deserve nothing less.

Mrs. NOEM. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his words and for his actions and the actions that we will be taking here on the House floor this week.

I turn now to the gentlewoman from Virginia, Representative COMSTOCK. She has been a leader in the fight against human trafficking in the Commonwealth of Virginia and now here on

the House floor. I yield to the Representative from Virginia.

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my colleagues for this opportunity to recognize this month as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month, and I thank my colleagues Congresswomen ANN WAGNER and KRISTI NOEM for organizing this effort.

I really appreciate how we are working together to raise awareness about this terrible crime that is happening in my district in northern Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley, throughout Virginia, and throughout—unfortunately—our country. This growing criminal enterprise we know knows no boundaries.

Mr. Speaker, the Fairfax County Police Department in my district has established the northern Virginia Human Trafficking Task Force to crack down on this scourge. In the past 12 months alone, just to give you an idea of this crime that is in the local area, the task force has had 156 leads, 109 victim recoveries, 267 victims identified, and 73 suspects.

Mr. Speaker, while we have done great work to combat this terrible crime in Virginia, we clearly have more work to do on every level: the local level, State level, and national level.

Four years ago, Virginia, for example, was at the bottom of the Polaris Project anti-human trafficking State rankings. Now, we are at the top because we passed many of the kind of bills that we are going to be able to pass here tomorrow and additional bills that are going to be here tomorrow.

I am very honored to be able to join all of my colleagues and with our faith-based organizations and our law enforcement officials and to be able to continue this work now on a national level and to be able to vote for these important bills that we will be addressing tomorrow.

Mrs. NOEM. I thank the gentleman for her remarks.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 351, LNG PERMITTING CERTAINTY AND TRANSPARENCY ACT

Mr. SESSIONS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 114-5) on the resolution (H. Res. 48) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 351) to provide for expedited approval of exportation of natural gas, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS A TRAGEDY

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to come to the floor at the end of the Special Order hour that Mrs. NOEM and Mrs. WAGNER have organized to join my colleagues in talking about the bills that are before us.

Human trafficking is an issue that affects every single county and community across this country—every single one. In my State of Tennessee and in the greater Nashville area, we have a wonderful organization, End Slavery Tennessee, that is doing great work to reach out, to minister, and to help.

I am so pleased that this week we are going to take the time to bring to the floor legislation that will be of help in training our medical personnel, that will also empower and encourage our law enforcement organizations and our faith-based and not-for-profit organizations.

This is a tragedy, modern-day slavery, that is taking place, the sex trafficking and the human trafficking, and I am so pleased that Congress is standing together to do something about it.

□ 1830

STRENGTHENING CHILD WELFARE RESPONSE TO TRAFFICKING ACT

(Mr. FRANKS of Arizona asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, I am honored today to be able to stand here in support of H.R. 469, the Strengthening Child Welfare Response to Trafficking Act. This is one of many pieces of legislation this week that we are going to be doing in the Congress, and I am so grateful to all of the people who have been involved in this critically important issue. I would especially mention the cochair of the Congressional Foster Youth Caucus, KAREN BASS, for introducing this groundbreaking legislation.

Mr. Speaker, Hubert Humphrey said a society is measured by how it treats those in the dawn of life, those in the shadows of life, and those in the twilight of life. This is such a critical issue to protect the 400,000 children in America who find themselves in foster care and vulnerable to being preyed upon by traffickers who know all too well how to exploit a child's hunger for love, acceptance, and a sense of belonging.

We must put the structures in place to treat child victims of trafficking like victims instead of treating them like criminals.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I remind us all that our first job here is to protect those who cannot protect themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to be able to stand here today in support of H.R. 469, the Strengthening Child Welfare Response to Trafficking Act. I commend my colleague Representative KAREN BASS, the founder of the Co-chair of the Congressional Foster Youth Caucus, for introducing this groundbreaking legislation and for continuing to devote herself tirelessly to making a better future for these abused and neglected children.

Hubert Humphrey said a society is measured by how it treats those in the dawn of life, those in the shadows of life, and those in the twilight of life. Mr. Speaker, this is so applicable to our nation's foster youth. Right now over 400,000 children in America find themselves in foster care for no fault of their own. . . . And it is that trauma of abuse or neglect, that brought them into foster care in the first place, on top of being in unfamiliar circumstances, that makes them exponentially more vulnerable to be preyed upon by traffickers, who know all too well how to exploit a child's hunger for love, acceptance, and a sense of belonging.

For too long, and far too often, victims of trafficking have been allowed to fall through the cracks in the system. We have not put structures in place to treat child victims of trafficking like victims, and not treat them like criminals.

This legislation will begin to bridge the gaps where law enforcement and child protection workers need to be better equipped in order to best protect children known or suspected to be victims of sex trafficking. It also requires the submission of annual reports on the number of child victims of sex trafficking, and the reporting of that data to Congress so that we can better assess how to prevent child sex trafficking, and remove barriers that keep us from truly serving those that have become victims, and most of all, to protect the hundreds of thousands of vulnerable children to keep them from ever having to endure the evil of sex trafficking.

I am grateful for my colleague Representative BASS's leadership on this issue, and to House Leadership for recognizing the priority that must be placed upon protecting some of our nation's most vulnerable children. And I pray we will continue to work and stand together for the right of every child to be safe, protected, cherished, and loved.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

(Mrs. MIMI WALTERS of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. MIMI WALTERS of California. Mr. Speaker, although slavery was abolished 150 years ago, today, modern slavery still exists in the form of human trafficking.

Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to control other people for the purpose of forced labor or sexual exploitation. According to the FBI, sex trafficking is the fastest-growing business of organized crime in the world.

Approximately 20.9 million victims of human trafficking exist in our world today, and hundreds of thousands of those victims are here in the United States.

California is not excluded from this criminal activity. In fact, within my congressional district in Orange County, there have been over 350 cases of human trafficking since 2004.

Victims are lured and manipulated by false promises of lucrative jobs, a loving relationship, or new opportunities and are usually between the ages of 12 to 14 when they first become victims of sex trafficking.