

March 21, 2007: Sanchez Holds Hearing on Human Trafficking

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Sanchez Holds Hearing on Human Trafficking

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (D-Garden Garden), Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Border, Maritime and Counterterrorism held the second hearing of a two part series on "Crossing the Border: Immigrants in Detention and Victims of Trafficking", where she and committee members examined the growing problem of human trafficking and the treatment of victims.

As Congress considers reauthorization for the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) this year, Sanchez invited governmental and nongovernmental authorities to address collaboration efforts in caring for human trafficking victims and prosecuting exploiters.

"Victims of human trafficking provide compelling narratives of coerced prostitution, gang rapes, kidnapping, threats of death and labor abuses," said Sanchez. "The victims are often voiceless because they fear retaliation on their loved ones. We have to make sure we understand the problems our law enforcement officials face in prosecuting the exploiters and provide them with the necessary resources to care for the victims."

At the invitation of Sanchez, Lt. Derek Marsh of the Westminster Police Department, who is also Co-Director of the Orange County Human Trafficking Taskforce (OCHTTF), addressed the subcommittee on the effect human trafficking has had in Orange County, particularly the Garden Grove and Westminster area.

Exploitation cases involving illegal immigrants have developed at a local level. "Instead of outright force and physical coercion, we're finding victims who are subjected to more psychological and situation coercion and duress tactics," said Marsh.

Sanchez joined Marsh in praising the work of local advocacy organizations in bringing attention to this domestic and global issue.

"The Vietnamese community in particular has taken the lead in bringing attention to this important humanitarian issue and has collaborated with local law enforcement agencies in addressing cultural issues in helping them with the victims."

Sanchez is expected to collaborate with other committees in the reauthorization of the TVPA addressing law enforcement's concerns with the definition of the law and expediting the process of providing assistance to victims of trafficking within local and federal agencies.

Last year, Sanchez secured \$200,000 in federal funding for the Orange County Anti-Trafficking Task Force to coordinate between local, state and federal law enforcement and non-governmental agencies to provide support services for trafficking victims. The funding will also support training for responding officers to improve their skills at identifying and rescuing trafficking victims, disrupting and apprehending traffickers, and making subsequent referrals for needed support services.

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