

December 4, 2007: William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act

The Honorable Loretta Sanchez

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE TRAFFICKING VICTIMS PROTECTION REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2007

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Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that today the House of Representatives passed H.R. 3887, the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2007.

This is an issue that impacts countries around the world, whether they are a source or destination for trafficked persons. Official estimates are that between 2 to 4 million persons are trafficked each year, including approximately 17,500 individuals who are trafficked into the United States.

One country that is a major source of trafficking victims is Vietnam. The congressional district that I represent in Orange County, California, is home to one of the largest Vietnamese constituencies outside of Vietnam. Hence, I have met with many people who have been trafficked from Vietnam, as well as advocates who work to help these victims.

I have personally visited Vietnam 3 times, and it has been apparent from my trips that human trafficking is a major problem facing women, children, and men in Vietnam. Vietnamese women are trafficked to other countries in Asia and elsewhere, where they are subsequently forced into marriage, labor, and prostitution.

Often, Vietnamese women are promised employment, and given fake working papers, but then they are instead sold into marriage, the commercial sex industry, or labor. These women often find themselves in a foreign country, with no legal status, and no ability to speak the language.

Given the large numbers of trafficked persons from Vietnam, and around the world, I am glad that the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act adds technical assistance and support to assist foreign governments with the prevention and prosecution of human trafficking cases.

It is critical that the United States share its resources to combat trafficking with the rest of the world. All of the members of our world community must work together to fight human trafficking.

The United States must also work to improve its efforts to combat trafficking within our own borders. This bill will assist with enhancing the rights of victims, who are trafficked into the United States, and will provide special protections to child victims.

H.R. 3887 is an important step in the worldwide fight against human trafficking. At the same time, we must continue to work on this issue in our local communities. In my district, a number of agencies, including law enforcement, service providers, and community organizations have joined together to form the Orange County Human Trafficking, Task Force (OCHTTF).

This task force operated for several years without any funding. I am proud that I was able to help them secure funding to continue their collaborative efforts to fight human trafficking. I commend the OCHTTF for its efforts, and hope that more local communities will stand together to protect the rights of all persons to live free from forced marriage, prostitution, and labor.