

Office of the  
**MERCED COUNTY  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY**

Chief Deputy District Attorney  
**MATTHEW T. SERRATTO**

Chief Deputy District Attorney  
**DAVID R. ELGIN**

Interim Chief Deputy District Attorney  
**THOMAS M. PFEIFF**



District Attorney  
**KIMBERLY R. H. LEWIS**

Chief Investigator  
**WILLIAM K. OLSON**

Director of Administrative Services  
**YVONNE M. BURNS**

Victim Witness Program Director  
**LISA DeSANTIS**

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**MERCED COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY KIMBERLY R.H. LEWIS  
ENDORSES SENATE BILL 1042**

**TO MAKE HUMAN TRAFFICKING A SERIOUS AND VIOLENT  
FELONY**

California has the notorious distinction of being one of the nation's top destinations for human trafficking. California consistently ranks number one in the nation in the number of human trafficking cases reported to the national human trafficking hotline. The California Attorney General has described human trafficking as "pervasive" within the State of California. In recent years, cities across the state have seen an alarming spike in the number of human trafficking cases.

Human trafficking is the fastest growing criminal enterprise in the world. Traffickers have learned that trafficking a person is much more profitable than trafficking other items of property, such as guns and drugs, since human beings are a reusable commodity. The highly profitable and reusable nature of trafficking victims has resulted in a rapidly growing criminal industry on our city streets and online. Traffickers can make upwards of \$2,500 a day forcibly selling victims in the sex trade.

California law plays a pivotal role in the ability to combat human trafficking and prevent repeat offenders from continuously enslaving additional victims. Under current California law, human trafficking is defined as a "non-serious" and "non-violent" crime. This also makes human trafficking a "non-strike" offense. The designation of human trafficking as a "non-serious" and "non-violent" crime has significant consequences under the law and permits traffickers to receive greater leniency under the law than those convicted of "serious" and "violent" crimes. As a result, human trafficking falls into the same category as other low level felony crimes such as vandalism, theft, and drug sales.

The horrific reality is that human trafficking is anything but non-serious and non-violent. By definition, human trafficking charges apply to those who are sexually exploiting or attempting to sexually exploit children and those who use force, fear, fraud, deceit, coercion, violence, duress, menace or an unlawful threat of injury on an adult that results in the substantial and sustained deprivation of the adult victim's liberty for the purposes of obtaining forced labor, services, or sexual exploitation.

In California, sex trafficking victims are forced to have sex with hundreds of strangers a year. Trafficking victims are not permitted to eat, sleep, rest, or receive other basic life necessities until they meet the daily demands of their traffickers. Every aspect of their life is controlled by the trafficker and victims are forced to live in an isolated world where terror and abuse reign. Traffickers thrive in a culture that reduces human beings to mere property to be sold and exploited at the trafficker's will.

The trafficking of children is particularly rampant in California, with traffickers forcing kids as young as 11-12 years-old to have sex with upwards of 15 men a day or more. The average age a child is forced into the sex trade is between 11-14 years old. Traffickers will often threaten to kill the children they enslave if they do not meet their daily sex quota demands. Traffickers will also threaten to hurt or kill the enslaved child's family if the child does not submit to the trafficker's demands. Besides verbal threats, traffickers will frequently burn their victims, beat them, and force them to have sex with them. Traffickers will also frequently brand their victims by forcing their victims to get the trafficker's name tattooed on their face or body.

Labor trafficking is no less insidious, as victims of labor trafficking are forced to work long hours in unsanitary and inhumane working conditions for little or no pay. Labor traffickers will often tell their victims they will not be believed if they try to report the crime and the authorities will deport them. Like sex traffickers, labor traffickers maintain total control over their victims by using a combination of physical force and psychological manipulation.

Both state and federal law enforcement agencies, including the California Attorney General, define human trafficking as "modern-day slavery." This label is well-deserved as traffickers control every aspect of a victim's life. Traffickers are exploiters of the worst kind, frequently targeting the most vulnerable and abused of society for their own financial and sexual exploitation. Women, children, and minorities are particularly vulnerable for exploitation, as are members of the LBTQ community.

For far too long in California, human traffickers have been treated under the law as "non-serious" and "non-violent" offenders. I urge you to support California Senate Bill SB 1042 which will change the law to make human trafficking a "serious" and "violent" crime. SB 1042 will also designate human trafficking as a "strike" offense. SB 1042 will provide greater protection to trafficking victims and send a clear message that we will no longer treat this as a non-serious and non-violent crime in California.

Please join me in supporting this bill by endorsing it at: <http://www.sb1042.news/Support>. I also encourage you to call the Offices of the State Senators on the Public Safety Committee and ask to speak with their Legislative Director to express your support of SB 1042.

Senator Steven Bradford (Chair)

Capitol Office Phone. 916-651-4035

Senator Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh (Vice Chair)

Capitol Office Phone. 916-651-4023

Senator Sydney Kamlager

Capitol Office Phone. 916-651-4030

Senator Nancy Skinner

Capitol Office Phone. 916-651-4009

Senator Scott D. Wiener

Capitol Office Phone. 916-651-4011

I encourage you to share your support for this bill online and with your friends. Together we can bring greater awareness to this horrific crime and provide greater protections for victims of human trafficking in California.

