



Feinstein's assault weapons ban would abolish the 2nd Amendment

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Human Trafficking: U.N. Ambassador, Mira Sorvino, addresses legislators in D.C.

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Photo: Mira Sorvino speaks on human rights at NCSL

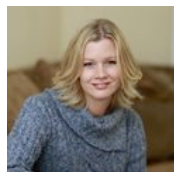
Wednesday, December 19, 2012 - Speaking Out by Holly Smith

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Holly Smith



Ask me a question.

WASHINGTON, December 19, 2012 -- The National Conference of State Legislatures' (NCSL) Fall Forum was held earlier this month in Washington D.C., and I was honored to join Oscar-winning actress and U.N. Goodwill Ambassador, Mira Sorvino, in the plenary session of speakers. Also a wife, mother, and Harvard graduate, Mira devotes much of her time towards promoting awareness for the heinous crime of human trafficking and advocating for its victims. [In her speech](#), she urged legislators to adopt numerous state laws aimed at preventing trafficking, prosecuting traffickers and buyers, and protecting victims.

During her speech, Mira unveiled a U.S. map which highlighted each state's rating according to [Polaris Project's](#) grading system. Polaris Project rated all 50 states and the District of Columbia based on ten categories of laws. Each state was placed in one of four tiers based on whether it had passed legislation in each of the ten categories.

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▶ Some statistics from Polaris Project:

Twenty-one states are currently in the top category, Tier 1 (up from 11 states in 2011)

Only four are in the bottom category of Tier 4 (down from nine states in 2011)

One-third of states increased their rating by at least one tier

Washington had the highest point total (with 11 out of 12)

Wyoming was lowest (with -2 points)

Massachusetts and West Virginia passed their first human trafficking laws in the past year

Twenty-eight states (55%) passed new laws in the past year

Massachusetts earned the "Most Improved" state distinction

South Carolina, West Virginia, and Ohio were also applauded for improvements

Wyoming has yet to pass any law against human trafficking

Wyoming is one of Polaris Project's "Faltering Four," the others including Arkansas, Montana, and South Dakota

Few states passed Safe Harbor laws

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Mira Sorvino has been a long-time advocate for Safe Harbor laws being enacted in each and every state. In February of this year, she interviewed with John Walsh (America's Most Wanted) for a two-hour special on sex trafficking. In the interview, Sorvino explained how Safe Harbor laws decriminalize children (or teenagers) and offer victims support and assistance.

"It gives them access to social services," Sorvino stated, "and really establishes that the child in prostitution is the victim of a trafficker- the pimp is the trafficker [and] the child is the victim."

As a survivor of child sex trafficking, I am also an advocate for Safe Harbor laws. Within hours of being lured away from home by a man in 1992, I was forced and coerced into prostitution. A police officer spotted me on Pacific Avenue only thirty-six hours later. But by then, I was unrecognizable even to myself.

My lack of cooperation angered the officer, and I was arrested. I was handcuffed, insulted on the drive to the station, searched by a female officer, and then threatened with juvenile detention until I gave up my real name. By the time police detectives realized I was a victim, I had become unresponsive. I was then sent home with no counseling, no support, no transition, and no explanation as to what had just happened to me.

Within days of my "rescue," I attempted suicide.

This is why I advocate, strongly, for Safe Harbor laws. As Mira points, child and teen victims of trafficking must be treated as *children*, not criminals. Victims of human trafficking need immediate aftercare and transitional services, along with follow-up support to help them as they move forward.

Polaris Projects lists the following as strong points for Safe Harbor laws:

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- Ban all guns
- There are enough rules and regulations; leave it alone
- Ban assault weapons/high volume magazines
- Stricter purchase laws/get rid of gun shows

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Strong laws grant immunity from prosecution or create the presumption that a child is a trafficking victim

Strong laws create diversion programs away from criminal or delinquency proceedings

Strong laws move children into services (e.g. safe shelters, mental health counseling, health care, education, etc.)

Illinois is listed with Polaris Project as having the most effective Safe Harbor law in place. Those which follow close behind include Connecticut, Washington, and Minnesota.

Safe Harbor laws are currently missing in 39 states and in D.C.

To find out where your state stands with laws like Safe Harbor, please visit Polaris Project's [2012 State Ratings Map](#).

On behalf of the [National Survivor Network](#), I would like to take this opportunity to thank the legislators who attended the conference and to beseech their sponsorship for all of the bills as outlined by Mira Sorvino and Polaris Project.

Holly Austin Smith is a survivor advocate, author, and speaker. She invites you to join her on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) and to follow [her personal blog](#).

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normajeana

Decriminalize all consenting adult commercial sex, stop conflating sex work with sex trafficking and then you might have the resources to help all victims of human trafficking, domestic violence, violent rape and sexual assault. There might even be sufficient resources to help the majority of victims of child sexual exploitation who are NOT sold to their predators- but rather- according to the US Government- 90% of the cases of child sexual exploitation are at the hands of someone whom the child knows and trusts... like priests, preachers, teachers, coaches, boy scout leaders, baby sitters, neighbors, parents and law enforcement agents.

Since January 2011 to date, over 300 law enforcement officers were caught having sex with minors or with child porn. These are not 'estimates'- I am referring to actual cases of law enforcement agents- the people you send out to 'rescue' those sex trafficking victims but who use their power and authority and their 'pillar of the

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01:00

Battle of the Buds: Who Owns the Name?



01:18

Raw: Funeral for Conn. Victim James Mattioli

PHOTO GALLERIES



Sandy Hooks Elementary School

Shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn.

community' status to seduce young victims. Where is the crusade to abolish the Scouting Program which is the primary means of contact with their victims?

0 minutes ago

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normajeana

Sex workers do not want children in this profession. Victims like Holly need to have more resources available to help them- but it will not help one single child sex trafficking victim to arrest a consenting adult sex worker OR his/ her consenting adult clients anymore than it would help one child victim of a pedophile priest to arrest two consenting adult homosexuals. In fact, squandering the scarce and valuable resources diminishes the available help that could be given to real victims of sex trafficking.

Around the world there are millions of young girls who are forced into marriage. The existence of 'child brides' is a phenomenon that must also be stopped. Girls as young as 8 are married to adult men. It is wrong- but it does not mean we should attempt to abolish ADULT marriage to help those children. Rational people understand that. Unfortunately, prostitution is an emotional issue and those who have the most horrific stories to tell about their 'victimization' are the most likely to get lots of money to fight their 'cause.' The majority of people doing sex work are adult and consent- just as the majority of women who get married are adult and are not victims of intimate partner violence, despite the fact that there are over 12 MILLION incidents of intimate partner violence every year.

The FBI recently released the criminal statistics for 2011, among which were over 243,800 REPORTED violent rapes and sexual assaults in the US. Law enforcement managed to arrest 14,943 alleged rapists. At the same time, the cops arrested over 449,083 ADULTS for prostitution and disorderly conduct. These are not people who were arrested or rescued for involvement in sex trafficking- these are people who were engaging in consensual commercial sex- or who offered to engage in said commercial sex. Meanwhile, the Polaris Project reported that in 2011, it had 773 (seven hundred and seventy three) phone calls related to 'crisis' calls- or 'potential victims of human trafficking.' The last figure for actual victims of human trafficking (NOT 'estimates') was from the 2011 US Government report which said that, over a 2 and 1/2 year period, it investigated 2,515 cases of alleged human trafficking. Of these, it found that 30% WERE actual human trafficking, 38% NOT human trafficking and the remainder were undetermined at the close of the study period. That's about 301 victims per year. Even if there are more that 'cannot be found'- would it not be better if the cops stopped arresting the nearly half a million consenting adults for consenting adult commercial sex so they had the resources to FIND the victims of sex trafficking?

How do they find victims of rape? Or domestic violence? Or ANY OTHER TYPE OF CRIME? The victim is required to report the crime before the cops will start an investigation... (except of course for homicide victims). Even victims of pedophile priests, preachers, teachers, coaches and cops must report the crime against them - the cops just don't go out and arrest people who MAY be pedophiles or arrest those who have sex with adults in order to STOP the abuse of CHILDREN...

0 minutes ago

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