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## Ky. lawmakers want changes to human trafficking law, say state should be safe harbor

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

First Posted: December 09, 2011 - 11:16 am

Last Updated: December 09, 2011 - 11:16 am

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BOWLING GREEN, Ky. — Two Kentucky lawmakers would like to make the state a safe harbor for victims of human trafficking with changes to the law when the General Assembly meets again in early 2012.

State Rep. Susan Westrom, D-Lexington, who sponsored human trafficking legislation in the House in 2007, and state Rep. John Tilley, D-Hopkinsville, are behind the push.

Tilley told The Daily News in Bowling Green that the criminal code can be enhanced to better deal with the issue (<http://bit.ly/up4WS4>).

"The safe harbor is essential," Tilley said.

State prostitution laws don't specifically apply to adults. A child prostitute could be charged criminally and found delinquent in the juvenile court system rather than treated as a victim. Laws that identify child prostitutes as victims of sex trafficking are typically referred to as safe harbor laws. Fewer than 10 states have enacted such statutes.

Besides identifying child prostitutes as victims of human trafficking, safe harbor laws also provide assistance to human trafficking victims.

"The challenge is going to be to find the funding for the shelter for these victims," Westrom said.

There is also no way of knowing how many human trafficking victims the state would have to serve because there are no studies that show definitive numbers, Westrom said.

National experts estimate the national number of child sex trafficking victims to range from 100,000 to 300,000 annually. Those numbers don't include adults or people trafficked for labor.

Tilley backs forfeiture laws that would allow the government to seize



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anything traffickers buy with money made from the crime.

"When somebody is profiting from what is modern-day slavery ... it's unthinkable, and the fruits of their labor need to be stripped from them," Tilley said.

The American Center for Law & Justice and Shared Hope International conducted a national yearlong analysis of state laws. The study found that Kentucky takes a tough stance on human traffickers, but pointed out a number of deficiencies, including the lack of safe harbor laws and the lack of state-mandated law enforcement training.

Tilley and Westrom support state-mandated law enforcement training so that police officers are better trained on how to recognize victims of human trafficking.

Victims of human trafficking don't self-report the abuse for a variety of reasons, and law enforcement questioning of people to try to determine if they are victims of that crime requires specialized training, said Staca Shehan, director of the case analysis division at the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

"It's a skill they have to acquire through education," Tilley said.

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**Norma Jean Almodovar** · Top Commenter · Los Angeles, California

You guys need to stop quoting BS stats that have been proven to be false. The source for your patently untrue statement that " the national number of child sex trafficking victims to range from 100,000 to 300,000 annually" was never an estimate of actual victims but of those who may be AT RISK. And even then, the numbers were thought to be very high and only an estimate based on GUESSES.

The April 2011 US Government report on human trafficking states that "Federally funded human trafficking task forces opened 2,515 suspected incidents of human trafficking for investigation between January 2008 and June 2010" and that "Among trafficking incidents opened for at least one year, 30% were confirmed to be human trafficking, 38% were confirmed not to be human trafficking, and the remaining incidents were still open at the end of the study period..." <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/cshti0810.pdf> This number DOES include children AND those trafficked into other areas of labor. The US Government spends hundreds of MILLIONS of dollars to find those alleged victims but they are NOT out there. Not 300,000 not 100,000, not 10,000 – so kindly stop peddling numbers which are complete fabrications of the abolitionist agenda folks.

There are those who will say "even one is too many" and we need to crack down on adult prostitution to save even one child... but if I suggested that we would then need to crack down on ALL other areas where children are at risk of being victims of sexual exploitation, such as shutting down all athletic programs in schools nationwide to prevent pedophile coaches from having access to children, or to abolish the Boy Scouts or the many other (and the major) sources where pedophiles find their victims, you'd say such a suggestion was nuts. But if it would prevent the sexual exploitation of even one child, wouldn't it be worth it?

The US Government report on child sexual exploitation ( available here: <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/saycrle.pdf> ) says that in 90% of the cases of child sexual exploitation, the perpetrator is someone whom the child knows and trusts– like coaches, priests, teachers, preachers, boy scout leaders and even cops ( [http://www.policeprostitutionandpolitics.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=57%3Aped-cops&catid=1%3Alatest-news&Itemid=41](http://www.policeprostitutionandpolitics.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=57%3Aped-cops&catid=1%3Alatest-news&Itemid=41) ), and that 68% are family members.

So, even if your BS stats were anywhere near true, it would mean that if there are between 100,000 to 300,000 child victims of sex trafficking, there would be between 1,000,000 to 3,000,000 child victims of sexual exploitation at the hands of family members and those whom the child knows and trusts... what are you planning to do about helping THOSE victims?

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**Norma Jean Almodovar** · Top Commenter · Los Angeles, California

While many do not, there are many victims of rape who DO report their abuse but unfortunately the government is more interested in going after people who have NOT reported abuse (prostitutes) than they are in finding the perpetrators of real crimes like rape. For example, in 2010, the US Government reported that in Kentucky there were 1,107 reported rapes, but only 16% of the rapists were apprehended:179. However, the police did arrest 185 people for consenting adult prostitution offenses.

Then there are the untold numbers of cases of domestic violence and spousal abuse which occur in your state as well as nationally (and internationally) and for which there is little justice for the victims. If you want to make your state safe for 'women and children,' focus on the crimes where victims do come forward and ask for help.

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