

#SurvivorsDemandNegotiation

March 20, 2015

Senator Patrick Leahy
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator John Cornyn
517 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Dick Durbin
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Senator Harry Reid, Minority Leader
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators McConnell, Reid, Leahy, Cornyn, and Durbin:

We write to you, the leaders of the U.S. Senate who have been particularly sensitive to our (often ignored) perspective. **We write to you as survivors of sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.** We write as survivors who know, profoundly and personally, the harm caused by this crime. And we write to you as survivor leaders of organizations trying to prevent sex trafficking before it victimizes others.

We write to urge you to NEGOTIATE in order to end the impasse currently blocking the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act (JVTA). All differences of opinion can be settled through negotiation. Don't derail an essential bill based on political games. We reiterate the three essential components we support in all trafficking legislation. These three components are present in JVTA, S178, including a new federal advisory council of survivors to review policy and programs:

1. **Identify new funding streams for victim services.** Current public budgets are stressed. Victims of sex trafficking typically suffer multiple harms, requiring a range of services from medical and psychological assistance to treatment for the drug and alcohol addiction that so often accompanies trafficking (addictions that make people vulnerable to trafficking; addictions that develop or worsen as people try to cope with the pain of this intimate form of abuse). We've been told by law enforcement in numerous jurisdictions that when services don't exist (mainly because they are expensive) there's a disincentive to enforcing anti-trafficking laws and identifying victims.

The *Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act* (JVTA), S 178, is innovative for creating a new fund to finance victim services—an essential goal. It also achieves a second principle we stand for: **Making sex buyers accountable for the harm they cause.**

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2. **Prevent sex trafficking by targeting the buyers who create demand.** Logically, trafficking will never end until we shrink the demand that creates the market. People still in the life, still being exploited, sometimes avoid this conclusion because they see no other options but the cycle of violence in which they are trapped. We are strong witnesses to the necessity of making the buyers pay, to make the crime end.

Two bills in particular strengthen accountability in the sex trafficking legal regime: S178 and [Combat Human Trafficking Act of 2015](#), S140. By clarifying congressional intent that sex buyers be considered parties to the trafficking crime, by compelling the Department of Justice to incorporate training and technical assistance on investigating and prosecuting buyers in its anti-trafficking programming, and by making the crime more “costly,” we can finally begin to shrink its incidence.

3. **Treat victims as victims, not criminals, and let survivor voices inform anti-trafficking policy.** Two bills in particular recognize these realities: *the [Stop Exploitation Through Trafficking Act](#)*, S166, which gives states incentives to approve “Safe Harbor” laws as well as job training options for victims and the [Survivors of Human Trafficking Empowerment Act](#), which creates a survivors-led U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking to review federal policy and programs (now in S178).

Other proposals may also make valuable contributions, but these are the three most important principles to incorporate in new legislative initiatives.

Thank you for your consideration. Please let us know if you have specific questions or would like more information on our program activities.

Sincerely,

Brooke Axtell, **Allies Against Slavery**, TX

Vednita Carter, **Breaking Free**, St Paul, MN

Tina Frundt, **Courtney’s House**, Washington, DC

Cherie Jimenez, Founder, **Eva Center**, Boston, MA

D’Lita Miller, Founder/Executive Director, **Families Against Sex Trafficking**, Los Angeles, CA

Kathi Hardy, Founder/Executive Director, **Freedom From Exploitation**, San Diego, CA

Cheryl Briggs, Founder/President, **Mission at Serenity Ranch**, TX

Necole Daniels, **MISSEY, Inc.**, Oakland, CA

Dr. Brook Bello, **More Too Life**, FL

Rebecca Bender, **Rebecca Bender Ministries**, OR

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Natasha Falle, Co-Founder, **Sex Trade 101/Canada**

Rachel Thomas, **Sowers Education Group**, Los Angeles, CA

Amy Green, **Survivors Consultation Network**, San Bernardino, CA

Autumn Burris, **Survivors for Solutions/SPACE Int'l Member**, San Diego, CA

Tom Jones, Founder, **The H.O.P.E. Project for Male Survivors**, San Diego, CA

Kristy Childs, **Veronica's Voice, Inc.**, Kansas City, MO

Jeanette Westbrook, **MSSW, Women Graduates- USA/SPACE Int'l Member**, KY

{Additional names were submitted to the U.S. Senators; however, six signatories wished to remain anonymous to the public}