



News Release

OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL ALAN WILSON
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

For Immediate Release
January 7, 2015

Contact: J. Mark Powell
(803) 734-3670
mpowell@scag.gov

Attorney General Wilson Calls on General Assembly to Pass Human Trafficking Bill by February.

Says “Modern-day slavery is alive and well in our state.”

(COLUMBIA, S.C.) South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson held a press conference on Tuesday, Jan. 6 to discuss much needed human trafficking legislation for the 2015 session. He stood alongside more than 30 members of the Human Trafficking Task Force in recognizing January as "Human Trafficking Awareness Month" and challenging the General Assembly to pass this legislation before the end of February.

“Modern-day slavery is alive and well here in our state,” Wilson stated. “We’re serious about our endeavor to make South Carolina the safest place to live, work and to raise a family.”

The proposed legislation would give the State Grand Jury authority to investigate human trafficking and provide law enforcement the necessary tools to go after traffickers. Attorney General Wilson stated that while much progress has been made over the last few years, “our work is not done on the legislative end.”

North Charleston Police Department Detective Charlie Benton shared his experience working with human traffickers and victims and the roadblocks he faces every day. “I’m here to tell you that we absolutely have this problem in South Carolina... This bill is absolutely essential for me to be able to do my job.”

Attorney General Wilson and Detective Benton were joined by State Senator Brad Hutto (D-Orangeburg) and State Representative Rick Quinn (R-Lexington), the two primary sponsors of this year's human trafficking legislation, S. 196 and H. 3125.

Sen. Hutto stated, “We don’t have an adequate way of fighting this yet – we’re working on it. Law enforcement and those who work with victims, they can only do so much until we give them the tools to do more. And that’s what this is geared to do.”

Attorney General Wilson concluded by thanking legislative leaders such as Senate Judiciary Chairman Larry Martin (R-Pickens) and House Speaker Jay Lucas (R-Darlington) for their support and by challenging the General Assembly to pass this legislation immediately. “There is no reason why we cannot get this law passed before the end of February. I’m asking so that officers and detectives like Detective Benton, and so many others in the trenches, can catch these modern-day slave traders.”

Rep. Quinn accepted the Attorney General's challenge. "Every day that this bill doesn't pass is just another day we're giving to the evil that is human trafficking. We're taking on the Attorney General's edict to try and get this done by February."

For more information on these efforts, or to view the State Plan to address Human Trafficking, visit <http://www.scag.gov/human-trafficking>.

###