



Free Congress Foundation Commentary

The Fight to Abolish Human Trafficking Within the United States

By Paul M. Weyrich

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Without doubt the Federal appointee who was most effective dealing with sex-trafficking was former Representative John R. Miller (R-WA). President George W. Bush has sought to end sex slavery within the United States and provide international leadership on the issue. Miller was appointed Director of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons for the U.S. State Department and became an Ambassador-at-large on the issue of modern slavery. Miller elevated the fight to a high priority in the Bush Administration.

Recently, Miller wrote an op-ed in *THE NEW YORK TIMES* which suggested that the effort to oppose sex slavery has met opposition in the Department of Justice (DOJ). Miller also made a presentation to a group with which I am involved. Upon hearing Miller's presentation I realized that the situation is worse than he described in *THE NEW YORK TIMES*.

After nurturing the 21st-Century abolitionist movement from 2002 to 2006, Miller believed that President Bush supported him despite objection to his efforts from numerous Ambassadors who did not want their host countries criticized. Miller stated that the President made it clear that his work was important. While he did not win every battle, he prevailed, often thanks to White House support.

One could imagine Miller's surprise when he learned that DOJ initiated a campaign to oppose a new Congressional bill which would strengthen the Federal Government's anti-trafficking efforts. In a 13-page letter, DOJ blasted nearly every aspect of the proposed legislation. In its annual report which rates how well countries are combating sex slavery, DOJ does not want to consider whether governments put traffickers in jail, nor does it want the Departments of Homeland Security and Health and Human Services to streamline their efforts to help the victims of sex-trafficking acquire visas and assistance. DOJ does not want to pool data with the Departments of State, Homeland Security and Health and Human Services on sex-trafficking and to devise prevention strategies.

DOJ opposes the creation of Presidential awards for groups leading the struggle against this modern-day slavery. It is against a citizens' task force to develop a pamphlet for victims. It does not want the State Department to give the telephone numbers of American anti-trafficking organizations to visa applicants at American Consulates worldwide.

Miller believes the vehement opposition by DOJ to this proposed legislation goes far beyond the usual turf battle which usually rears its ugly head in Washington, D.C. Miller states that DOJ opposes changes which would expand its own authority to combat trafficking. For example: Should they prosecute American tourists who create the demand for sex-trafficking in foreign countries? Should Congress provide increased penalties for Americans who sexually abuse children abroad? Should American jurisdiction extend to Americans who traffic human beings abroad? Should the Attorney General include information in his annual report on his department's efforts to enforce anti-trafficking laws against federal contractors and employees? No, it should not do any of these.

Miller believes this letter is the product of the mostly male DOJ staff working with the Erotic Service Providers Union and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). He does not believe the President saw or approved the 13-page letter. In the House of Representatives there is a Caucus on Human Trafficking, co-chaired by Representatives Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) and Debbie Price (R-OH). They have been trying to coordinate a meeting with the President but have been

unsuccessful. Regardless of one's opinion of President Bush, it is impossible to dismiss his sincerity and determination on such issues. I am willing to wager that this letter went to Capitol Hill without his approval. There is time for President Bush to reverse this injustice.

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