

Excerpts of remarks by [Rep. Chris Smith \(R-NJ\)](#)  
Human Trafficking Awareness Event  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
Washington, DC—January 28, 2020

Special thanks to Secretary Elaine Chao for her leadership in combatting the cruelty of human trafficking both in the 8 years she served as Secretary Labor, and now, at Transportation and for the [Transportation Leaders Against Human Trafficking Initiative](#).

Deep thanks as well to all the assembled leaders—for your commitment and effectiveness in this human rights and humanitarian cause.

[Truckers Against Trafficking](#) have written the book on how to discern and disrupt human trafficking networks through training and referrals to law enforcement. You are the eyes and ears on the highways—thank you Kendris.

Human trafficking is a barbaric human rights abuse that thrives on greed, secrecy, a perverted sense of entitlement to exploit the vulnerable and an unimaginable disregard for the victims.

Twenty years ago, the U.S. Congress approved and the President signed legislation that I authored—the [Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000](#)—a comprehensive whole-of-government policy to combat sex and labor trafficking in the United States and around the world.

This past January, I authored another bill that was signed into law by President Trump—my fifth major law on human trafficking— [The Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Act](#). The new law honors the extraordinary legacy of one of the greatest Americans who ever lived.

Among its many “prevention” provisions, the Douglass Act provides grants to local education agencies in partnership with NGOs to establish, expand and support programs:

- to provide age-appropriate information to students on how to avoid becoming victims of sex and labor trafficking;
- to educate school staff to recognize and respond to signs of sex and labor trafficking.

The law also requires General Services to ensure that any contract entered for the provision of air transportation with a domestic carrier submit the number of personnel trained by that carrier, notifications of number potential victims, whether they contacted the trafficking hotline or law enforcement.

In 2010, I chaired a congressional briefing and heard compelling testimony and best practices from many leaders—including [Nancy Rivard of Airline Ambassadors International](#).

Yesterday I spoke to her in El Salvador where she is advising that government on airline training of flight attendants, pilots and other personnel akin to what was prescribed in the 2016 and 2018 FFA reauthorizations.

To date, [she organized 117 airport training seminars—including at New Jersey’s Newark International and an OSCE multi-nation conference that I had proposed in Kiev, Ukraine](#).

More than 100,000 aviation officials have been trained through the [Blue Lighting Initiative](#).

As we all know, children are especially vulnerable. According to the [International Labor Organization \(ILO\)](#) one in four trafficking victims is a child.

. In 2008, I first introduced [International Megan’s Law](#). It passed the House in [2010](#), [2014](#), [2016](#)—and, thankfully, finally cleared the United States Senate and was signed into law in 2016—eight years later!

Megan Kanka of Hamilton—my hometown—was just 7 years old when she was kidnapped, raped, and brutally murdered in 1994. Her assailant lived across

the street. Unbeknownst to her family and other residents in the neighborhood, he was a convicted repeat sex offender sexual predator.

We know from law enforcement and media documentation that Americans on the U.S. sex offender registries are caught sexually abusing children in Asia, Central and South America, Europe, and, frankly, everywhere.

A deeply disturbing 2010 report by the GAO found that at least 4,500 U.S. passports were issued to registered sex offenders in fiscal year 2008 alone. Typically, a passport is valid for 10 years, meaning some or many of the tens of thousands of registered sex offenders possessing passports may be on the prowl internationally looking to exploit and abuse.

Now, under *International Megan's Law*, convicted child sex offenders who travel abroad must provide notice to the U.S. Government—via the [Angel Watch Center](#)—prior to departure of all planned destinations. Failure to do so carries a significant jail term commensurate with a convicted child sex abuser not reporting to local law enforcement. Upon receipt of the travel itinerary, the U.S. government informs the destination country or countries of those plans.

The destination country or countries are then empowered with actionable information to render the traveler inadmissible.

International Megan's Law also requires the passport of convicted child sex offenders to carry this endorsement: "The Bearer was convicted of a sex offense against a minor and is a covered sex offender pursuant to 22 United States Code Section 212 (C) (I)."

The law is working. In just about two years, 10,541 covered sex offenders had been noticed by the U.S. government to foreign countries—and 3,681 individuals as of July who were convicted of sex crimes against children were denied entry into those nations.

Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes who just spoke has not only pioneered an aggressive multifaceted strategy through his [Utah Trafficking in Persons \(UTIP\) Task Force](#) and prosecutors of the Utah SECURE Strike Force—but when I learned of his amazingly heroic and brilliantly planned and executed undercover 2014

sting in Cartagena, Columbia with Operation Underground Railroad in which he and others posed as sex tourists to disrupt 3 trafficking rings in 3 Columbian cities—and rescue 120 child victims, I was in awe.

[Mr. Reyes testified at one of my trafficking hearings in May of 2015](#) and as an undercover buyer he said he “saw up close the horror and helplessness in the eyes of young girls ages 10-16 after the drugs the traffickers had given them had worn off and they were paraded in front of us like a pet or a dessert to sample...we transacted large amounts of cash, and captured on hidden cameras the disgusting things” the traffickers said could be done to these children.

The AG and his team not only liberated 120 innocent girls and boys that day but trained local law enforcement.

The rescued children shouted: “Thank you Americans, we love you Americans.”

For what you’re doing here, children and victims of every age shout thank you.