

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 412

Denouncing human trafficking.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 24, 2009
 Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 20, 2009

WHEREAS, human trafficking is reportedly the largest and fastest growing criminal enterprise in the world today, and is the modern day practice of slavery; and

WHEREAS, an estimated 27 million human beings worldwide are in the bonds of modern-day slavery, which occurs today in myriad forms including prostitution, pornography, mail order brides and forced marriages, domestic service, sweatshops, child labor, the commercial sexual abuse of children, abduction of children and adults to fight in armies, trafficking for adoption purposes, and factory, farm, and migrant farm work; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of State estimates that 800,000 men, women, and children are trafficked across international borders each year, and that the nationalities of trafficking victims are as diverse as the world's cultures; and

WHEREAS, no country is immune, as the United States Department of Education stated that cases of human trafficking have been reported in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and some United States territories, and school age children are particularly vulnerable to the ploys of human traffickers due to their naivete and gullibility; and

WHEREAS, an estimated 50,000 people are trafficked into the United States each year, of which approximately half are forced into sweatshop labor and domestic servitude, and many others are forced into prostitution and the sex industry; and

WHEREAS, young children are kidnapped and sold for adoption, and women and young girls from other countries are trafficked into the United States; and

WHEREAS, the democratic principles upon which this nation was founded affirmed in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness"; and

WHEREAS, slavery and involuntary servitude are prohibited by the 13th Amendment of the United States Constitution, and trafficking in human beings, a horrendous depredation of human rights to which thousands of persons are subjected around the world, is repugnant to the ideals of the nation and this Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the promise of liberty and prosperity in this nation reverberates around the world to many desolate souls; however, many persons who are trafficked into the United States against their will discover only fear, bondage, vile exploitation, and merciless persecution while human traffickers generate billions of dollars in tax-free profits at the expense of millions of victims around the world; and

WHEREAS, Congress passed the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 to supplement existing laws and establish new tools and resources in the war against human trafficking, yet traffickers in human beings through force, fraud, and coercion continue to prey upon the most vulnerable, the helpless, the unemployed, the poor and destitute, the hopeless, and children throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, in 2007, the General Assembly established the Commission on the Prevention of Human Trafficking for the purpose of developing and implementing a state plan for the prevention of human trafficking; and

WHEREAS, although human trafficking is pervasive, it is an underreported crime, and combating the problem requires global public awareness of the problem, coordination of anti-trafficking efforts both worldwide and domestically, the conscious and deliberate involvement of all citizens, and the unequivocal declaration that the despicable practice, wherever it may be found, will not be condoned or tolerated in the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby denounce human trafficking; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Executive Director of the Virginia Municipal League, the Executive Director of the Virginia Association of Counties, the Superintendent of State Police, and the President of the Board of Directors of the Virginia Sheriffs' Association, requesting that they further disseminate copies of this resolution to their respective constituents so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly in this matter.