

Sex Trafficking Demand Reduction Act

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The Global Sex Trafficking Market

According to the State Department, human trafficking generates at least \$150 billion per year across the globe.¹ Estimates from international organizations place the profits even higher, with sex trafficking generating \$173 billion annually off the forced sexual exploitation of over 6 million victims worldwide.² Tragically, over one-fourth of this total – roughly 1.7 million sex trafficking victims – are children.³

The Role of Demand

Significant attention has been paid to disrupting the *supply* of the illegal sex trade, such as dismantling the criminal networks that traffic women and children. However, more can – and must – be done to address the *demand* driving this horrific market: the individuals purchasing trafficked victims.

Study after study shows that criminalizing demand has a direct impact on sex trafficking:

“Countries where prostitution is legal experience larger reported human trafficking inflows.”⁴

“There is not a market for women in prostitution and a separate one for sex trafficking victims.”⁵

“Sex trafficking is much higher under a legalization model than under a prohibition one.”⁶

“If there were no demand for commercial sex, sex trafficking would not exist in the form it does today.”⁷

Bill Summary

The United States has the tools to address this problem worldwide. Mandated by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, the State Department’s annual Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP Report) is the U.S. government’s foundational analysis of each foreign nation’s efforts to eliminate human trafficking. All foreign nations are measured against certain criteria defined in statute and given a ranking from Tier 1 (best) to Tier 3 (worst). Tier 3 countries may be subject to restrictions on U.S. foreign aid.

The Sex Trafficking Demand Reduction Act would strengthen these criteria, changing the current requirement of making serious and sustained efforts to “reduce” demand for commercial sex, commonly known as prostitution, to whether or not a foreign nation has made serious and sustained efforts to:

- 1) Prohibit the purchase of commercial sex acts or enact a policy against the purchase of commercial sex acts.
- 2) Educate buyers of commercial sex on how traffickers exploit prostituted persons for human trafficking.
- 3) Reduce demand for participation in international sex tourism by nationals of that country.

Sex trafficking is a global issue requiring a global response. All nations must take the appropriate steps to end the illegal sex trade.

¹ U.S. Department of State. January 2025. “The Role of the Financial Sector: Promising Practices in the Eradication of Trafficking in Persons.”

² International Labour Organization. 2024. “Profits and Poverty: The economics of forced labour.”

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Cho, Dreher, and Neumayer. 2013. *World Development*. “Does Legalized Prostitution Increase Human Trafficking?”

⁵ McKenzie, Shamere. 2017. *A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence*. “Two Questions, The Same Answer: The Role of Demand in Prostitution and Sex Trafficking.”

⁶ Di Nicola, Andrea. September 2021. *European Parliament*. “The differing EU Member States’ regulations on prostitution and their cross-border implications on women’s rights.”

⁷ U.S. Department of State. June 2013. “Trafficking in Persons Report.”