

U.S. Attorney's Report to the District

In a Report to the District posted last year, I discussed the U.S. Department of Justice's focus on combating human trafficking. (See Issue #12, February 2011.) In recent years, the Department has brought record numbers of human trafficking cases. Here in the Eastern District of California, this office is attacking the problem together with Attorney General Kamala Harris and other state and local law enforcement officials. In the Report posted last February, I described the formation of the North and Central California Anti-Trafficking Team (NCCATT), a regional task force that promotes anti-trafficking enforcement through training and increased law enforcement coordination. Over the next two months, NCCATT will be holding four training sessions in this district for state and local law enforcement officials.

One of the most insidious forms of human trafficking is the sex trafficking of minors, in which children are coerced into prostitution. These children are not only economically exploited, but are often subjected to cruel, violent, and degrading treatment by their pimps. The victims of these crimes bear psychological and emotional scars that can last a lifetime.

What the U.S. Department of Justice should be about, and in its finest moments what it has stood for, is ensuring that the weakest and most vulnerable in our society receive the full protections to which they are entitled as Americans. Few are weaker and more vulnerable than the child victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Our commitment to them is reflected in the increase in child sex trafficking prosecutions in this district.

This month, a man charged by this office was arrested in Illinois and is being returned to Sacramento for trial. He is accused of prostituting minors, including a 15-year old girl, and of beating them repeatedly. Last month, a Visalia man was charged with using violence to coerce a 16-year old into prostitution, and a man from the East Bay was charged with pimping a 14-year old girl in the Sacramento area. In February, a Modesto man was indicted on charges of child sex trafficking. Since the beginning of 2011, this office has charged at least 14 persons with felony offenses for prostituting children.

These cases can lead to lengthy prison terms. Deandre Brown of Sacramento was sentenced last year to 30 years in prison for forcing two under-aged girls to work for him as prostitutes. Evidence at his trial established that Brown raped, beat, pistol-whipped and threatened his young victims. In another case, Stephen McKesson of Citrus Heights was sentenced in 2010 to more than 19 years in prison for pimping a young girl, starting when she was only 14 years old. One Sacramento man was sent to prison for over 12 years for forcing a 16 year old girl into prostitution, and another is serving a seven and a half year term for recruiting two minors to work as prostitutes. Others who seek to profit from the cruel exploitation of children will soon be joining them behind bars.

If you would like to communicate with our office, contact the main number in Sacramento, or submit a suggestion by clicking on the button below. Thank you.

United States Attorney

Benjamin B. Wagner