



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

## Lanza & Paulin Announce Passage of Historic Human Trafficking Bill in Both Houses of Legislature

ANDREW J LANZA March 17, 2015

### ***Bill Will Help to Prevent Human Trafficking and Give Greater Protection to Trafficked Victims***

Historic human trafficking legislation has passed in the New York Assembly today (A.506) and requires only the Governor's approval to become law. Senator Lanza secured unanimous passage of The Trafficking Victims Protection and Justice Act (S.7) in the New York State Senate on January 12, 2015. Human Trafficking is a scourge which destroys lives from one end of the Country to another.

The Trafficking Victims Protection and Justice Act save lives by preventing the exploitation of children and adults who are victims of human trafficking. The bill toughens penalties against those who buy and sell young women, men and children and reduces the stigma defendants may face when they are victims of the massive \$32 billion sex trafficking industry.

"I made a commitment to the people of the State of New York that this bill was at the top of my priorities during this legislative session," said Senator Andrew Lanza. "After securing passage of this bill as one of the first of the year in the Senate, I am thrilled to report that Assemblywoman Amy Paulin has just secured passage of the bill in the Assembly. Assemblywoman Paulin and I as partners in this legislation have been dedicated and unwavering in our commitment to see this historic bill become law and we are now only one step away from realizing that goal."

Assemblywoman Amy Paulin said, "I can't begin to say how thrilled I am that the Trafficking Victims Protection and Justice Act has finally passed. Human trafficking is a heinous crime in which pimps take advantage of some of the most vulnerable in our society. It's a \$32 billion industry and of the approximately twenty-seven million people who are trafficked each year, the majority are girls and young women. That my colleagues were willing to get over partisan politics and vote on this bill as a stand-alone is significant. In doing so, they did the right thing and decided that helping victims of these crimes was far more important than waging a political battle."

Key provisions of the measure include increasing the accountability of traffickers and buyers by raising the penalty for sex trafficking to a class B violent felony; creating the felony sex offense of “aggravated patronizing a minor”; and aligning the penalties for patronizing a minor with those of statutory rape.

The bill will also strengthen the investigative tools to make a case against traffickers. Sex trafficking will be an affirmative defense to prostitution and the term “prostitute” will be eliminated from the Penal Law, as that term stigmatizes defendants who are in fact victims of sex trafficking. Nowhere else in the state’s Penal Law are individuals identified by the crime they allegedly committed.

Senator Lanza said, “Human trafficking is a modern version of the slave trade and a devastating human rights violation that is occurring in our own backyards. Here in New York, thousands of innocent people are bought and sold like property each year. I’m proud to have authored and passed the long-awaited Trafficking Victims Protection and Justice Act (TVPJA) to enhance protections for trafficking victims and hold those who exploit them accountable. I thank Assemblywoman Paulin, Senator Skelos, Speaker Heastie and the many advocates who helped make this possible.”

Senator Lanza first introduced the Trafficking Victims Protection and Justice Act in 2013. One portion of the comprehensive bill was signed into law (S5839A) in January, 2014, allowing 16- and 17-year-olds charged with prostitution and loitering for purposes of prostitution to be treated in criminal courts as Persons In Need of Supervision (PINS) and provide those youth with specialized services.

This bill was also passed in June 2013, June 2014 and January 2015 as part of the Senate’s Women’s Equality Agenda.

The bill will be sent to the Governor.

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