



NEWS RELEASE

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Wilson joins Solicitors and Legislators in Tackling Human Trafficking

Columbia - South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson joined 14th Circuit Solicitor Duffie Stone and lawmakers in urging passage of a human-trafficking bill that has been stuck in committee since last year.

The bill criminalizes sex trafficking, gives prosecutors the power to seize the assets and property of convicted traffickers, and provides much-needed support to victims, who often suffer in silence.

Wilson, Stone, and lawmakers spoke at a State House press conference in support of House Bill 3757. HB 3757 was introduced in February by state Rep. Nelson Hardwick, R-Surfside Beach and was referred to the House Judiciary Committee, where it remains.

The bill would also give human-trafficking victims the right to bring lawsuits against their oppressors.

South Carolina was identified by the nonprofit Polaris Project of Washington, D.C., as one of nine states whose laws failed to adequately address human trafficking.

"Law enforcement in this state is ready and willing to arrest and prosecute human-trafficking offenders, but there currently is no law on the books for them to use," Wilson said. "We must do better in South Carolina, and that means immediately passing a law to allow authorities to crack down on this growing crime problem."

"Human trafficking is a clandestine crime, meaning it often goes underreported or sometimes totally unreported in many cases," Stone said. "The people running these organizations do so the same way (former Mafia boss John) Gotti did -- through fear and intimidation."

According to the bill, human trafficking has been reported in Myrtle Beach, Charleston, Columbia and Greenville, but advocates say the crime is not limited to those areas.