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Effort to Combat Human Trafficking Seeks Place on November Ballot in California

*CASE Act brings together survivors, political leaders, and law enforcement
to begin signature gathering effort*

San Francisco, CA – Advocates, political leaders and survivors gathered in San Francisco today to formally kickoff the campaign to gather the 800,000 signatures needed to put the CASE Act on the ballot this November. The Californians Against Sexual Exploitation Act (CASE Act) will increase penalties and fines for those who engage in human trafficking, provide new restrictions for those convicted of these crimes, and mandate new law enforcement training to ensure proper enforcement and sensitivity for victims across the justice system. Comprehensive information can be found at www.caseact.org.

California is a hot spot for domestic and international human trafficking because of its large population, international borders, large economy, extensive ports, and metropolitan regions. At the same time, California received an “F” grade in a recent national report on laws to protect children against sex trafficking.

The announcement was timed to coincide with National Human Trafficking Awareness Day on January 11th and featured Congresswoman Jackie Speier, Chris Kelly of the Safer California Foundation, advocates from California Against Slavery, law enforcement leaders and trafficking survivors.

Congresswoman Jackie Speier, a longtime supporter of efforts to reduce human trafficking and sexual slavery, endorsed the measure today saying, “Human trafficking knows no borders. California needs to lead the way for the nation and the world. This initiative will raise awareness and harness the outrage of 17 million Californians to say once and for all that we won’t stand for the trafficking of 12 year old girls and we won’t give pimps and exploiters an easy way out of the justice system. I’m fighting for enhanced policies at the national level but the meat of this fight is at the local level. I am proud to support the CASE Act in California.”

“Victims need to know that every California voter is standing with them,” said Chris Kelly, Founder of the Safer California Foundation and a Silicon Valley attorney and philanthropist who formerly oversaw online privacy, safety, and security efforts as Chief Privacy Officer at Facebook. “Anonymity on the internet has driven the ability of those who seek to exploit others. By not having electronic information as part of the sex offender registry, we are missing out on critical data that could protect kids online more effectively. We are reaching out to every Californian who believes that children and women deserve a life free of exploitation and enslavement. The CASE Act is our opportunity to protect the people of this state against sexual exploitation on our streets and on the Internet.”

In November, California Against Slavery and the Safer California Foundation submitted the Californians Against Sexual Exploitation Act (“CASE Act”) to the California Attorney General to strengthen laws against human traffickers and improve Megan’s Law against online predators. The ballot initiative that is now circulating for signatures across the state would:

- Increase prison terms for human traffickers
- Increase fines for human traffickers, up to \$1.5M to fund victim services
- Remove the need to prove force to prosecute sex trafficking of a minor
- Mandate human trafficking training for law enforcement
- Make sex traffickers register as sex offenders
- Require that all sex offenders disclose internet accounts
- Prohibit use of sexual history to impeach or prove criminal liability of trafficked victims

“Imagine being 11 years old and having your body used and abused for the sake of someone else's monetary gain. No one should have to endure this brutality, especially not a child,” said Leah Albright-Byrd, Executive Director of Bridget’s Dream and a survivor. “The CASE Act wages war against the atrocity of human trafficking in California.”

“Each day thousands of women and children in California are at risk,” said Daphne Phung, Founder of California Against Slavery, a sponsor of the initiative. “California harbors three of the FBI’s High Intensity Child Prostitution Areas in the nation: Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego. However, women and children are sexually exploited every day in every county of the state. This is not a political issue nor is it a debatable issue. It’s a human rights issue. We don’t have to stand by and let it happen. It’s our duty to stop it. We have a big problem, but it’s one we can address with smart laws, tough enforcement, and greater public awareness,” she added.

“Human trafficking is the most egregious and under-recognized human rights abuse in the United States today and we can do something about it here in California,” said Brian Marvel, President of the San Diego Police Officers Association. “This initiative will give law enforcement the tools we need to prevent this horrible crime and save lives. When approved by California voters, this initiative puts the first nail in the coffin of human trafficking for our state and the rest of the nation.”

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About CASE Act (CASEAct.org)

The CASE Act is a joint partnership of California Against Slavery and the Safer California Foundation. Slated for the November 2012 California Ballot, the CASE Act will deter traffickers with higher penalties and fines, use fines to fund victim services, remove barriers to prosecute child sex traffickers, mandate training for law enforcement officers, require convicted sex traffickers to register as sex offenders, require all sex offenders to disclose Internet accounts, and protect victims in court proceedings.

About California Against Slavery

California Against Slavery (CAS) is a non-partisan human rights organization dedicated to ending human trafficking, starting where we live. The organization’s mission is to defend the freedom of every child, woman and man by empowering the people of California to fulfill our obligation to stop human trafficking.

Human trafficking is a criminal business that profits from enslaving people for forced labor and sexual servitude. This criminal enterprise victimizes United States residents, many of them children, who are trafficked for sexual purposes, and foreigners brought into the country, often under fraudulent pretenses, who are coerced into forced labor or commercial sexual exploitation. For more information, please visit <http://www.CaliforniaAgainstSlavery.org>

About Safer California Foundation

The Safer California Foundation is dedicated to supporting efforts to protect Californians from all forms of criminal exploitation. Created by Chris Kelly, former Facebook Chief Privacy Officer and a Silicon Valley attorney and philanthropist, the Safer California Foundation looks forward to the day when every neighborhood in California is as safe as our most secure neighborhoods today.