



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

April 10, 2015

To all Texans who stand for freedom and against modern slavery:

Thank you for giving a voice to those who cannot speak for themselves.

Human trafficking and slavery destroy a person's dignity and cruelly strip away an individual's humanity. Human traffickers hold men, women and children against their will. Through force, fraud or coercion, these victims are made to work in the sex industry.

I have seen the horrific trauma inflicted on its victims. Some are just girls, as young as 12, who are sold as mere property, as slaves.

Texas is a national leader in the fight to end human trafficking.

The State of Texas passed one of the first state-level anti-trafficking laws in the United States in 2003. Regional task forces were established across the state to identify victims, create response systems and bring traffickers to justice.

In 2009, Texas created the Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force, which I chaired. And in 2011, the Texas Legislature passed 32 of our recommendations to help identify trafficking victims, strengthen victim protections and increase the number of prosecutions. In 2013, ten more recommendations became law, including increased penalties for traffickers and added services for victims.

And this year, thanks to Rep. Senfronia Thompson, Rep. Ed Thompson and all of my partners in the Legislature, a bill has passed in the House giving prosecutors and law enforcement officers even more tools to crack down on human traffickers. This legislation empowers my office to coordinate care for children who are victimized by sex traffickers.

But there is more we can do. There is more we must do, here at home and around the world.

I would like to thank all of the students present at Texas Ending Modern Slavery Day for your energy and passion, for speaking out and for taking action. You are sending a message to the world that as people of faith and as people of conscience, we will not respond with apathy, but with resolve because we stand for freedom.

I encourage all Texans to learn more about recognizing the signs of trafficking.

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With your support, Texas will continue to lead the fight to stop the criminal enterprises profiting from this heinous exploitation and end this scourge on our humanity.

May God bless you and your families. And may God forever bless the great State of Texas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Greg Abbott". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a horizontal line at the end.

Greg Abbott
Governor