



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Elected Officials Host Legislative Symposium on Sex Trafficking

Symposium held in recognition of National Human Trafficking Awareness Month

Madison –Representatives Jill Billings (D-La Crosse), La Tonya Johnson (D-Milwaukee), Joel Kleefisch (R-Oconomowoc), Jessie Rodriguez (R-Franklin) and Sen. Nikiya Harris Dodd (D-Milwaukee) hosted a legislative symposium today for elected officials and citizens in recognition of National Human Trafficking Awareness Month.

“Sex Trafficking has been documented in every single county in Wisconsin,” said Rep. Billings. “January has been designated as National Human Trafficking Awareness Month and also marks the beginning of our new legislative session. This is a very important time to address these issues.”

The symposium featured opening comments from legislative hosts followed by panel speakers from governmental and non-profit organizations addressing various local and statewide anti-trafficking initiatives. Speakers included Tracy Johnson, Executive Assistant U.S. Attorney and Chair of the Milwaukee Federal Human Trafficking Taskforce, JoAnn Gruber-Hagen, chair of SlaveFreeMadison, Dana World-Patterson of the Human Trafficking Task Force of Greater Milwaukee, Nicole Tynan, sex trafficking survivor and service provider at Reach Counseling Services of the Fox Valley, and Sister Marlene Weisenbeck, chair of the La Crosse Taskforce to Eradicate Modern Slavery.

“Human Trafficking is an imperative public safety issue which impacts the lives of children and families all across Wisconsin. In order to protect our state’s children we must act now” Kleefisch said. “This symposium was an excellent way to raise awareness and encourage meaningful dialogue. I look forward to working across the aisle with my colleagues and passing comprehensive, bi-partisan legislation to help curb the abhorrent practice of Human Trafficking.”

The panel discussed various awareness initiatives such as Milwaukee’s “Unlucky 13” campaign which emphasizes the age which most children are introduced to sex trafficking. Speakers also shared experiences in victim assistance and rehabilitation as well as community based grassroots efforts.

“I am very proud of the work Milwaukee has done as a community to band together against human trafficking,” said Rep. Johnson. “Forums like this are a great place for folks from across the state to bring their ideas and experience to the table and unify.”

“We were fortunate to have such distinguished panelists and speakers at the Capitol today to highlight and raise awareness about the trafficking of individuals in our state,” stated State Senator Nikiya Harris Dodd. “As we continue to raise awareness about this terrible crime, it is my hope that we can band together to find proactive solutions in the future to prevent, address, and provide resources to victims of human trafficking.”

Representatives expressed their hope that today’s symposium will inspire legislative action and spark constructive cross-party discussions.

“Many great ideas have been presented to the legislature and some have been passed into law, but neighboring states like Minnesota, Illinois, Michigan are leading the way legislatively and Wisconsin must do the same,” concluded Rep. Billings.