

Editorial Opinion

Naples Daily News

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Human trafficking laws

Lawmakers' unanimity should inspire rest of us

When Congress passes legislation nearly unanimously in its partisan environment and the president signs it, that's a good indication the subject matter is of universal concern.

When the Florida Legislature — during a session when Republicans feuded publicly, not just with Democrats — passes two bills unanimously and the governor signs both, there's a reason to believe a serious issue warrants attention.

Both of those scenarios just happened, within the same approximate time frame and on the same issue: human trafficking.

Human trafficking is not just a national issue, it's statewide and local.

In years past, much of the attention about trafficking, or modern-day slavery, focused on agricultural recruits smuggled across the border. That was reflected a decade ago in the Naples Daily News' award-winning series "Forbidden Freedom: Slavery in Southwest Florida." It was reflected in the elevated concern by the Collier County Sheriff's Office, which in 2005 created a human trafficking unit still active today. Yes, here in this community of comfort and riches.

Back then, there were stories of field workers being recruited and brought illegally to Florida to work in servitude. But there also were emerging, unsettling stories of teenagers smuggled into this country from Central America as sex slaves.

Now, the problem has evolved. Sex slaves aren't just smuggled across the border. USA-born kids are vulnerable. Runaways are vulnerable. Young adult women, economically challenged or drug-dependent, are vulnerable.

Alex Olivares, coordinator of the Human Trafficking Resource Center based at Florida Gulf Coast University, shared some startling research findings during a recent appearance on "Naples Daily NewsMakers": for each trafficking victim brought across the border, a half-dozen victims are American-born. That adds up to an estimated 200,000 American children at risk yearly of becoming a trafficking victim, in sex rings or engaged in pornography.

This isn't prostitution. It's beyond. It's kids controlled by coercive, profiteering adults.

The new laws

Congress and the Florida Legislature adopted new laws that chief executives signed within the past month.

According to a Library of Congress summary, the federal Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act creates a victim assistance fund from fines paid by human traffickers. It authorizes the U.S. attorney general to provide grants for domestic child trafficking intervention programs. It calls for training doctors and other health professionals to be able to spot victims and know how to help. On the law enforcement side, it expands wiretapping authority for federal agents and state prosecutors to investigate human trafficking, child sex abuse and child pornography.

One of the Florida laws signed by Gov. Rick Scott requires the state to post human trafficking public-awareness signs at rest areas, turnpike plazas, strip clubs, certain emergency rooms and massage parlors, plus other locations. The informational signs provide a help number to the always-staffed National Human Trafficking Resource Center — hotline 1-888-373-7888 or text 233733 (BE FREE).

The second bill increases protections for trafficking victims and increases penalties for anyone who solicits another person into prostitution.

Those laws move us in the right direction, but will need to continue to evolve as law enforcers uncover new trafficking rings and trends.

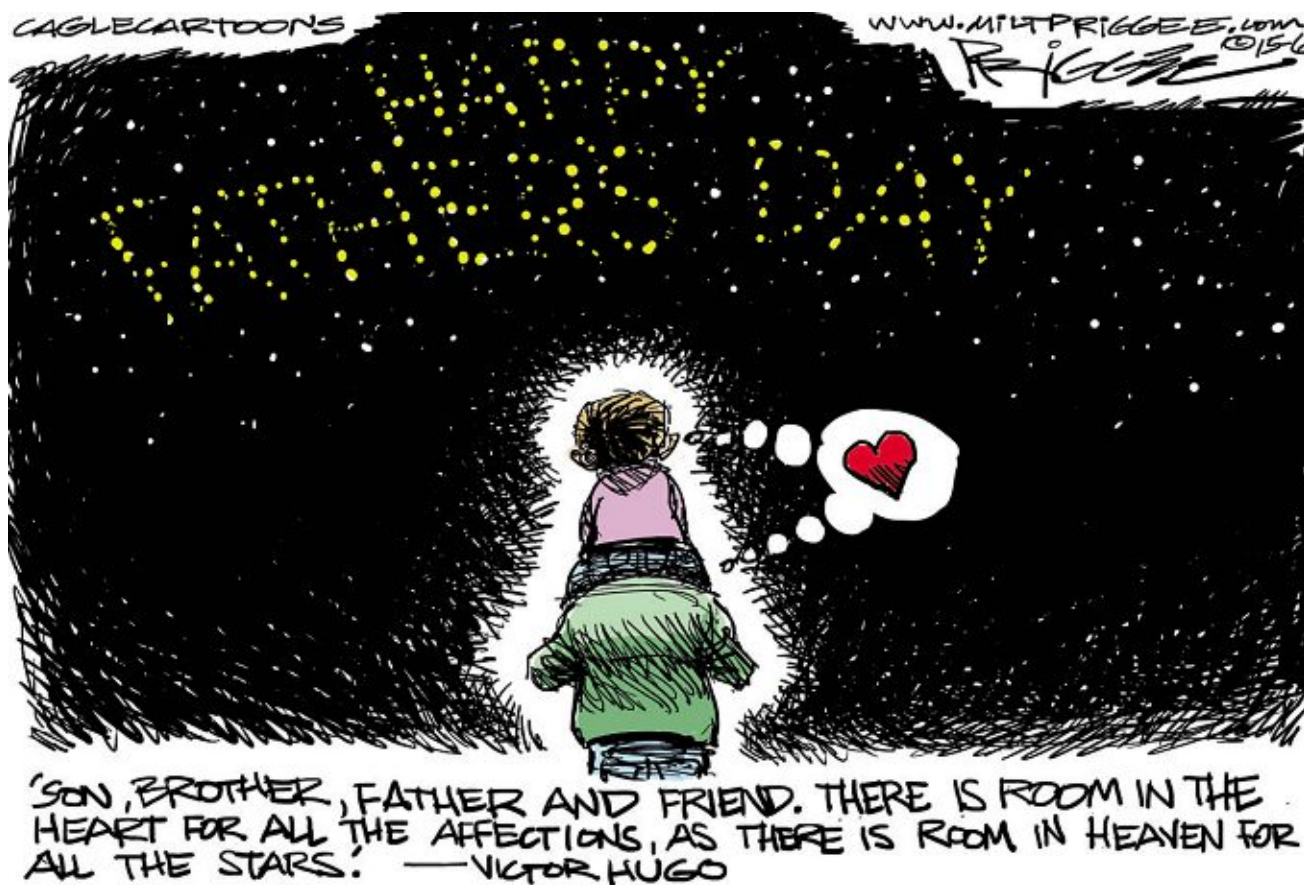
What can you do?

The first step for you to get involved is to become informed.

Brenda Tate, president of the Women's Foundation of Southwest Florida, which raised money to create the FGCU center in 2014, spoke on "NewsMakers" of the organization's new public awareness and social media campaign: Stop Sex Trafficking SWFL.

The organization (womensfundflorida.org or 239-281-2233) and FGCU center (fgcu.edu/HTRC or 239-745-4276) can provide information, such as how to get speakers to share tips with your church, homeowners or civic group on identifying victims and ways to get involved to help.

If divided chambers in Washington and Tallahassee can unite to tackle this important issue, can't everyone?



LETTERS

David Rutstein, *Naples Chairman,*
and Jaclynn Faffer, *Naples President/CEO,*
Naples Senior Center and JFCS of Southwest Florida

National exposure

JFCS and the Naples Senior Center say "thank you."

We want to say "thank you" to so many friends in the community who contacted us as a result of a recent national TV news feature.

On May 22, "PBS NewsHour" aired a report on senior citizens and food insecurity. While we often see these stories about older adults in big metropolitan areas, this particular story featured seniors who are our neighbors — right here in beautiful Naples.

PBS spent time with several members of the Naples Senior Center, a program of JFCS, who struggle to put food on their tables. What the story made clear was that these individuals worked, saved and "did the right thing" — but illness, loss of employment, the downturn in the economy and/or the death of a spouse created crises that they have difficulty overcoming by themselves.

You can see the PBS story at www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/number-hungry-seniors-doubled-since-2001-going-get-worse/ and www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/senior-hunger-photo-essay/.

Many people have reached out to congratulate us on the work we are doing, to make a donation to support our work to make our Greater Naples community a better place. We deeply appreciate your support.

Meanwhile, our food pantry and meals programs are only a part of what we do at the Naples Senior Center on Castello Drive. For more information, go online at www.jfcsswfl.org or give us a call at 239-325-4444 to arrange a tour. We would love to show you around — but pardon our dust as we are expanding.

Cheryl Laventure, *Bonita Springs*

Consequences

Recently there was an article about a 12-year-old boy who had broken into a school in Orlando at night. The police were called and, upon arriving, called out that if he didn't surrender, they would send in a K-9. Well, he ran, the dog chased him and bit him. So far so good.

However, now the first reaction of his "parents" is to sue the police. It was nighttime, as in dark. There was no way to tell how old this criminal was.

Sorry, but if one of my kids had ever pulled a stunt like this, my first reaction would have been to damage his other arm, ground him for a very long time and impress upon him he got exactly what he deserved.

Maybe if more parents taught their kids that actions have consequences we might just not have as many kids being involved in police-related

Letter of the Day

C.P. Irving, *Naples*

Pave paradise

"Pave paradise, put up a parking lot" echoed throughout the Neighborhood Cafe on its last Saturday.

Nine years of smiles, gathered friends and delectable creations from Leigh's kitchen ended. This wonderful, eclectic family will persevere, but for the rest of us who found solace at this little coffee shop, only memories will remain.

And when we stop at this familiar corner, look up ... four stories ... we will shake our heads and wonder, "How much is enough?" Comes the reply: "I'm never satisfied!"

incidents.

Of course, that would require parenting, which seems to be on a definite decline.

David Bolduc, *Naples*

U.S. News rankings

This past May, U.S. News & World Report released the 2015 nationwide public high school rankings. The report ranked all schools by three measurements — college readiness, mathematics proficiency and reading proficiency. Additionally, to ensure comparability, the researchers used the nationally administered AP and IB exams to compare high schools across state lines.

On a scale of 1 to 100, Barron Collier High School was the only Collier County high school to receive a college readiness score above 50 at 50.9. All other Collier County high schools scored below 50, ranging from Naples High at 42.1 to Immokalee High at 13.7.

While School Board members Julie Sprague and Kathy Curatolo consistently default to minority percentage and income disadvantage as the reasons for Superintendent Kamela Patton's subpar measurable performance, this report tells a different story.

Specifically, if you compare Naples High, with a minority enrollment of 40 percent and economically disadvantaged enrollment of 40 percent, to Attleboro High School in Massachusetts, with a minority enrollment of 24 percent and economically disadvantaged enrollment of 37 percent, Naples High scored 63 percent in math proficiency and 64 percent in reading proficiency, while Attleboro High scored 81 percent in math proficiency and 92 percent in reading proficiency.

Additionally, Brockton High School in Massachusetts, a city ranked 341 in Massachusetts in per capita income, with a minority enrollment of 76 percent and economically disadvantaged enrollment of 76 percent, scored 66 percent in math

proficiency and 85 percent in reading proficiency.

Sprague, Curatolo, Daily News editorials and failed School Board candidate Luis Bernal need to stop labeling Erika Donalds and Kelly Lichter's decision to not rubber-stamp Patton's bottom-tier measurable educational results as "dysfunctional."

Sonny Gutro, *Naples*

Red-faced in Naples

One of the more embarrassing experiences one can endure in Naples is to present a gift card to pay for dining at a local restaurant only to be refused because the server tells you the card has no value.

After this happened to me on two occasions, at two very reputable restaurants, it occurred to me that there may be an attitude change needed by our local culinary community to honor gift cards regardless of their age and/or to manage them in this age of technology so they don't get lost down some unknown black hole.

Since we live in a community where many residents are seasonal and may be out of town for months and not have a chance to use a gift card in a timely manner, I wonder how much unspent revenue this might generate for these restaurants and how many embarrassing moments diners may be experiencing.

On several occasions I attempted to use gift cards at one establishment only to be told there was no value on them. Twice they were \$100 cards that I know had small value amounts — \$10.95 and \$8.65 — left on them as well as one card valued at \$100.

Another time after receiving a \$100 gift card, I was asked if I had the original purchase receipt which the gift-giver didn't provide when the card was given to me. I opted to pay our bill by personal credit card and am now in possession of a \$100 gift card that is of no value and again was embarrassed.

So what's the moral of this tale? Be extra careful if you receive a gift card for a local restaurant because if you don't have a receipt with proof of purchase, and if you don't use the card in a timely manner, you have a good chance of walking away red-faced.

W.D. Hoss, *Naples*

Free trade

As could be expected, the labor union-controlled Democrats have been responsible for the major put-down of their leader, President Barack Obama.

But at the same time they have voted against the best interests of the American people. They voted against free trade with the Pacific Rim countries.

Their motivation was self-serving combined with the belief that Obama, in the negotiations, would sell the country down the river as he has in all previous international agreements.

I guess they can be right and wrong in the same vote.