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Press Releases

Press Release of Senator Wyden

Wyden Legislation Seeks to Disrupt Oregon Sex Trafficking

Rescue Victims, Prosecute Pimps

Thursday, November 12, 2009

Portland, OR – Recognizing Oregon’s increasing human sex trafficking problem, Oregon Senator Ron Wyden today proposed greater protections for victims as a way to aid the prosecution of pimps.

At a news conference in Portland, Wyden was joined by Multnomah County Commissioner Diane McKeel, Multnomah County District Attorney Michael Schrunk and representatives of police and victims’ rights advocates, who endorsed the legislation proposed by Wyden.

“Sex trafficking is slavery, pure and simple. It’s time to take a harder line in prosecuting those who prey on young girls and lure them into a life of sexual exploitation,” Wyden said. **“The first step in doing that is separating them from their pimps and providing them with a safe and promising alternative so they can provide law enforcement with the evidence needed to bring the real criminals to justice.”**

“These girls are victims. Their pimps are the criminals,” Wyden said. **“Without a place for the girls to escape to, they return to life on the street and to the same men who exploited them in the first place. That leaves police and prosecutors with no victim and no case.”**

“Safe housing is a desperately needed next step in combating the sexual exploitation of our youth,” McKeel said. **“This will allow us to build on the good work that is already being done here with partners at the Federal, State and local levels. I am honored to be a part of this effort and enthusiastically support Senator Wyden’s proposed legislation. We can’t stand by idly any longer as thousands of young women are victimized right here in our own country every year.”**

Wyden’s legislation would target federal funds to regions of the country with the greatest need, including Oregon. Each pilot project would receive a grant of \$2.5 million. The money would be used for:

- Shelters to provide separate housing for trafficking victims
- Clothing and other daily needs in order to keep victims from returning to the street
- Victims’ assistance counseling and legal services
- Education or job training classes for victims
- Training for law enforcement and social service providers
- Police officer salaries – patrol officers, detectives, investigators
- Prosecutor salaries, and other trial expenses
- Investigation expenses – wire taps, expert consultants, travel, other “technical assistance” expenditures (currently, there is a cap on “technical assistance” that is too low.)
- Outreach, education, and deterrence/prevention efforts.

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