

backed away from forcing a vote on the bill and merely introduced a resolution in support of ICE, however, Democrats did not object. The resolution quietly passed by a 244-35 vote, with most Democrats voting “present” — a convenient way to avoid taking a stand one way or another.

Plenty of lawmakers still *say* they want to see ICE abolished, Senators Kirsten Gillibrand and Elizabeth Warren, both 2020 presidential front-runners, have come out in favor of wiping out the agency. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez — the new socialist face of the Democrats, who has managed an astonishing level of media since her surprise primary victory in June — also says she is in favor of abolishing the agency. New York City Mayor Bill De Blasio, head of one of the nation’s most aggressive sanctuary cities, says he also favors abolishment.

I mention these names because none of these politicians are high-

ly visible Democrats, pressured the party to push a bill that would do just what they propose. Nor did any of the Left’s enablers in the media do so. Networks like CNN and MSNBC glossed over the legislation. Late-night comedians like Michelle Wolf, Samantha Bee and Jimmy Kimmel overlooked it entirely. This proves that Democrats saying they want to abolish ICE is mere virtue-signaling. God forbid they take a stand voters outside of what their base might actually hold them accountable for.

In a way, that’s what saddened me most about Thomas Homan’s appearance on Fox News. He was citing facts that we should all, as Americans, be thankful for. ICE does invaluable work to keep us (and the illegally trafficked children that liberals claim to care so much about) safe from serious danger. Yet none of these very salient facts is likely to persuade any liberal that abolishing ICE is a fun-

damentally unserious idea. Such are the strange triangulations of the American Left. They do not believe in stringently enforcing our drug trafficking laws, even though they would never dream of voting to repeal them. They do not believe in going after child traffickers, even though they pay pharisaical lip service to stopping them. They do not care about violent criminals walking our streets, unless (of course) the problem is local. They do not believe in the mission of ICE — but they wouldn’t dare abolish it, for fear of the very justified backlash they would reap at the voting booth from the rest of America.

Mr. Homan was recently replaced by Ronald Vitiello. One can only hope and pray that he does not find himself in the position of having to defend his agency against the absurd claim that enforcing the law and protecting Americans is somehow equivalent to terrorism. 🐦

HUMAN TRAFFICKERS ARE UNWELCOME IN TEXAS

by Ken Paxton, Texas Attorney General

One of my first major initiatives as attorney general was the formation of a special unit dedicated to combating human trafficking in Texas. I set the bar high, with the expectation that my office would conceive of new innovative approaches to combat these horrific crimes. By all objective measures, my office’s Human Trafficking and Transnational/Organized Crime section has achieved tremendous results.

In April 2018, the unit delivered a 1-2 knockout punch to backpage.com, a nefarious and predatory website blamed for 73 percent of all child trafficking cases reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. The Backpage business model was to generate millions of dollars annually on the backs

of innocent women and children who were forced or coerced into sex trafficking.

First, we assisted the U.S. Department of Justice in permanently shutting down Backpage, which operated websites in 97 countries, 943 locations and 17 languages worldwide. Then, our office’s prosecution of Backpage resulted in the company itself pleading guilty to human trafficking in Texas, and its CEO, Carl Ferrer, pleading guilty to money laundering. Ferrer’s mandated cooperation in the ongoing investigation into Backpage could lead to other criminal charges against individuals associated with the company.



This victory was a long time coming. All previous attempts to bring down Backpage proved fruitless. With its unlimited ill-gotten gains, Backpage routinely dodged law enforcement and court actions against it through various legal maneuvers or stalling tactics, all the while enabling criminals as the largest online sex trafficking marketplace in the world.

That Backpage could be headquartered in Texas seems unfathomable, and it underscores the point that human trafficking can and does happen everywhere. Unfortunately,

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ly, our state accounts for the second highest number of calls in the nation to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline. Alarmingly, recent research estimates that there are roughly 313,000 victims of human trafficking in Texas. There is no doubt that Backpage was a major driver of those numbers.

Human traffickers and Backpage, operating in a fortress defended by high-powered lawyers, forged an alliance that was mutually beneficial to both. Seeing the forces of evil work together in this way, it soon became clear that our only hope of piercing Backpage's seemingly impregnable legal armor lay in combining our efforts with others. In 2016, my office's human trafficking unit teamed up with the California Attorney General's office to execute a search of Backpage's Dallas headquarters and arrest its CEO. At the time, I noted that Backpage appeared to have knowingly and willingly allowed women and children to be exploited for its own financial gain — even going so far as to deceptively edit advertisements to provide cover for the traffickers. I also vowed to ensure that Backpage would never operate in Texas again.

Both Congress and President Trump also deserve significant credit in the fight against modern day slavery. By amending the Communications Decency Act, they have made it possible for victims to hold their torturers accountable — a feat Backpage previously was able to thwart. This legislation not only empowers victims to seek justice from Backpage itself, it couples with law enforcement to construct a strong deterrent to any entity interested in filling the void left by Backpage.

The demise of Backpage puts human trafficking on the defensive in Texas — and indeed across the country and the rest of the world. It

represents a potential sea-change in efforts to end human trafficking for good. Taking down the site will save many lives and spare countless other innocent women and children from the unspeakable horrors of sex trafficking. But our fight is far from over: the work of integrating victims back into society, educating the public, and pursuing perpetrators is ongoing.

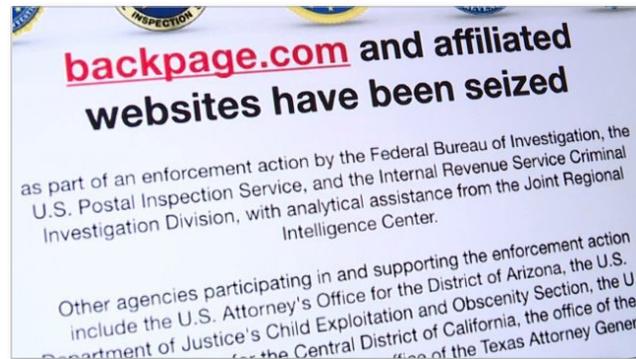
New innovative partnerships are also effective tools to help catch and prosecute traffickers. The public-private partnership between my office, the nationwide group Truckers Against Trafficking, and the Texas Trucking Association is an example of a successful creative partnership. With nearly seven million members, the trucking industry's reach spans all of Texas and the rest of the nation. Through an ongoing training program, truckers are learning how to spot and report suspected trafficking activities. The program has generated thousands of calls to the National Human Trafficking Hotline.

Recently, prosecutors from our human trafficking unit teamed up for the first time with the Travis County District Attorney's Office on a case involving the trafficker of a 14-year-old girl. The collaboration resulted in a conviction of the perpetrator and 40-year prison sentence. Since its inception, the unit has resolved 19 cases through convictions or guilty pleas. My office works closely with other local prosecutors across the state, and in some cases, other parts of the country to bring justice for victims.

Another effective way to fight human trafficking is to spread awareness of the issue. Through my office, Texas was the first state to commit to a series of coalition builds across the state to educate law enforcement, truckers, prosecutors, educators, medical professionals and others about human trafficking. To date, we have provided human trafficking awareness training to more than 15,000 Texans.

Each of us is in a position to spot human trafficking, so we should know what to look for and what to do when we have suspicions. Earlier this year, my office unveiled a powerful human trafficking awareness training video entitled "Be the One." It teaches Texans how to "Be the One" in their communities to help eradicate human trafficking. I invite you to watch it at <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/human-trafficking>.

Abraham Lincoln, writing of slavery in the mid-19th century, remarked "Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves; and, under a just God cannot long retain it." The takedown of Backpage, in particular, witnesses to the truth of his words. I will not stop until human trafficking — the slave trade of the 21st century — is vanquished in Texas. 



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