

Review of State Anti-Trafficking Laws in the United States of America and Their Success in Combating Human Trafficking and Protecting the Victims

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Abstract : In the year 2000, the federal government of the United States of America enacted anti-trafficking legislation to prevent human trafficking, prosecute traffickers, and protect the victims. Since then, all 50 states have followed the federal government's example by enacting state-level anti-trafficking legislation. In order to fight human trafficking in the United States, it is paramount that this legislation is not only comprehensively enacted but also enforced. This study reviewed the anti-trafficking laws enacted in each of the 50 states and investigated the success of such laws by reporting the number of trafficking related prosecutions, cases identified, and victims protected. This study reviewed human trafficking reports issued by nonprofits, and state and federal level agencies. An increase in the number of cases investigated since the state laws have been passed reflects a moderate success in the fight against human trafficking in the U.S. This review also found that although every state has passed anti-trafficking legislation, many still lack a comprehensive approach to combat human trafficking; some states lack key provisions to prevent human trafficking, prosecute traffickers, and protect its victims. This, along with the lack of enforcement of the anti-trafficking plans included in each of the state legislations, has meant that the human trafficking cases investigated in fiscal year 2016 are not near the estimated numbers; which in turn suggests that this crime is still greatly unaccounted for. This study concludes that although important steps have been taken at the national and state level to combat human trafficking, the identification and prosecution of human trafficking cases still proves challenging in the United States.

Keywords : enforcement of laws, human trafficking, anti-trafficking legislation, United States

Conference Title : ICHT 2018 : International Conference on Human Trafficking

Conference Location : Prague, Czechia

Conference Dates : March 22-23, 2018