



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

# **Assemblywoman Amy Paulin and Senator Andrew Lanza Host Press Conference to Promote the Trafficking Victims Protection and Justice Act**

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**ALBANY** - Assemblywoman Amy Paulin (D-88) and Senator Andrew J. Lanza (R-24) today hosted a press conference to promote the Trafficking Victims Protection and Justice Act (TVPJA), the legislation they have championed that toughens penalties in New York against those who buy and sell young women, men and children to fuel the massive \$32 billion sex trafficking industry.

The press conference served to urge the passage of the TVPJA as well as to highlight May 13 as Human Trafficking Awareness Day in New York State.

“The effort to bring those who engage in human trafficking to justice and raise public awareness of this heinous exploitation of vulnerable children and adults has been a long journey,” Paulin said. “Slowly, we are bringing out of the shadows the trafficking of young men, women and children.

“By listening to these courageous survivors we begin to understand the depth and complexity of the circumstances that led to their victimization so that we can implement effective means not only to prevent human trafficking but also to eradicate it altogether, and provide victims with the critical services they need to escape from their traffickers and rebuild their lives.”

Paulin and Lanza, outspoken in their fight to end human trafficking and sexual slavery in New York, introduced the TVPJA last year. One portion of the comprehensive bill was signed into law earlier this year. The new law allows criminal courts to treat 16- and 17- year olds charged with prostitution and loitering for purposes of prostitution as Persons In Need of Supervision (PINS) and provide those youth with specialized services. The remainder of the TVPJA passed as a stand-alone in the Senate last year and as part of the 10-Point Women’s Equality Agenda in the Assembly. Paulin hopes to have the TVPJA voted on in her house as a stand-alone.

“Here in New York, thousands of innocent people are bought and sold like property each year,” Lanza said. “Human trafficking is a modern version of the slave trade and a devastating human rights violation that is occurring in our own backyards. It is urgent that we pass the long awaited Trafficking Victims Protection and Justice Act to enhance protections for trafficking victims and hold those who exploit them accountable.”

Key provisions of the TVPJA include increasing the accountability of traffickers and buyers by raising the penalty for sex trafficking to a class B violent felony, creating the felony sex offense of "aggravated patronizing a minor," and aligning the penalties for patronizing a minor with those of statutory rape. The bill will also strengthen the investigative tools to make a case against traffickers. Sex trafficking will be an affirmative defense to prostitution and the term "prostitute" will be eliminated from the Penal Law, as that term stigmatizes defendants who are in fact victims of sex trafficking. Nowhere else in the Penal Law are individuals identified by the crime they allegedly committed.

“The victims in these crimes are most often young women who have had their childhood stolen and their lives left in ruin because of greedy, depraved individuals,” Paulin said “The goal of the TVPJA is to help all those who have been commercially sexually exploited and provide them with the tools they need to rejoin society and recapture as normal a life as possible.”

“We need to pass the TVPJA in its entirety. By coming here today and lobbying to pass the TVPJA and proclaiming May 13 Human Trafficking Awareness Day in New York, we will keep a light shining on this intolerable offense against humanity and continue to remind the people of this State that this vicious and vile practice of trafficking human beings for the purposes of sex must be permanently stamped out. Remember, People Are Not For Sale.”

Members of the New York State Anti-Trafficking Coalition, comprised of 140 organizations throughout the State, including NOW-NYC, Sanctuary For Families, and The New York State Public Affairs Committee (NYSPAC) of the Junior League, were in attendance. Distinguished guests include the Honorable Judy Harris Kluger, executive director of Sanctuary For Families, Lisa Hofflich, co-chair of NYSPAC of the Junior League, Lauren Hersh, director of Anti-Trafficking Policy and Advocacy for Sanctuary for Families, and Janmarie Brown, director of Residential Gateways Program.

Several survivors spoke at the press conference, including a young Ukrainian woman who was trafficked by her boyfriend while she was in college and girls from Gateways’ Project Impact. In addition, survivors who are part of an all-girls teen trafficking network performed an excerpt from a play created by the ArtsEffect performance group about their commercial sexual exploitation.

“Human trafficking is a scourge on all communities and all walks of life,” said Lisa Hofflich, co-chairwoman of the Junior League NYSPAC. “The 7,500 women of the Junior League, representing 17 communities throughout New York State decided to come together to help tackle this atrocious issue because we are mothers and sisters. We know this is happening in upscale towns and inner city neighborhoods. It has to end in New York now.”