



Thank you for contacting me regarding human trafficking and its human and social costs. Trafficking in people for prostitution and forced labor is one of the most prolific areas of international criminal activity and is a significant concern of mine. I appreciate you taking the time to write me about this very sensitive subject.

I was troubled to learn that Washington state has been listed as a hub for human trafficking and recruitment because of our borders with Canada and our many ports. According to a report issued by the Washington State Task Force Against Trafficking of Persons, trafficking has occurred in 18 counties throughout our state and most victims were brought to this country as "mail-order" brides, sex workers and domestic laborers. In order to combat these terrible crimes of modern day slavery, Washington was the first state to make trafficking a state crime.

Since trafficking is an underground criminal enterprise, there are no precise statistics on the extent of the problem and all estimates are unreliable. However, according to the most recent Department of State estimates, between 600,000 and 800,000 people are trafficked across borders each year for forced labor, domestic servitude, or sexual exploitation. Combined with trafficking within countries, the total figure is estimated at between 2 and 4 million. These numbers include more than 14,500 persons trafficked to the United States annually.

In order to address this issue, in the 112th Congress I cosponsored S. 1301, the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2011. This bill, sponsored by Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), is currently under consideration by the Senate Judiciary Committee. It would extend the authorization for some of the U.S. government programs aimed at combating human trafficking.

Again, thank you for contacting me on this important issue. If I can be of assistance in the future, please do not hesitate to contact me again. If you would like to know more about my work in the Senate, please feel free to sign up for my weekly updates at <http://murray.senate.gov/updates>. Keep in touch.

Sincerely,

Patty Murray  
United States Senator