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KASICH LAUNCHES PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN TO STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Coordinated Effort is Part of An Unprecedented Campaign to Curb Human Trafficking in Ohio

COLUMBUS -- Today, Gov. John Kasich kicked off a new public awareness campaign to ramp-up Ohio's ongoing fight against human trafficking, the illegal trade of people for commercial sex or forced labor exploitation that enslaves approximately 1,000 Ohioans every year. The new campaign, led by the Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force, gives Ohioans new resources for how they can personally help combat the problem by reporting suspicious activity. It also is aimed at connecting with trafficking victims themselves, with outreach materials in places where they are likely to see them, such as public transit sites and highway rest areas.

"We may not want to admit it—it's almost too horrific to imagine—but the fact is that human trafficking is real and is happening across Ohio. Over the past two years we've improved our laws to fight trafficking and begin getting victims the help they need, but we must do more. This incredible effort to coordinate state agencies and provide resources free to the public to increase awareness takes Ohio to the next level in our effort to bring an end to this modern-day form of slavery," said Kasich.

The campaign was unveiled by Kasich Administration officials at Ohio's 5th Annual Human Trafficking Awareness Day, hosted by Rep. Teresa Fedor (D-Toledo). Details of the campaign can be found here: HumanTrafficking.Ohio.Gov. Its key areas include:

- To educate the public on how to recognize the signs of human trafficking;

- To promote the appropriate method for reporting human trafficking situations;

- To direct victims of human trafficking to available services and treatment, helping them to regain control of their lives.

To date, the Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force has obtained the following commitments from across Ohio:

- The Ohio Turnpike commission will place posters in 14 service plazas along the Ohio Turnpike, and will use the materials on toll plazas when ad-space is not being used, and will display the materials on Turnpike TV.

- The Department of Public Safety will print 5,000 posters which will be made available to the public.

- The Department of Youth Services has committed to post materials in their youth facilities and use the campaign to facilitate youth community service projects that partner with local anti-trafficking organizations and shelters.

- The Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections will post the materials in all prisons, along with community-based correctional facilities and halfway houses. DRC estimates they could potentially reach 125,000 Ohioans in January.

- The Ohio Department of Health has committed to post the materials in STD/TB clinics in every county throughout the state.

- The Department of Jobs and Family Services will post materials in all Ohio Farm Worker Program offices.

- The licensing boards for health professionals (Nursing, Medical, Pharmacy boards) are teaming up in a joint effort to reach their licensees with the campaign materials.

- And the Ohio Hispanic and Latino Affairs commission has translated the materials into Spanish, and committed to distribute the materials to Ohio's new immigrant communities.

- The State Library of Ohio will distribute posters to all 732 of Ohio's libraries.

Background:

In March 2012, Gov. Kasich signed an Executive Order creating the Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force, charging the group with marshaling state resources to put a stop to human trafficking. In its recommendations made to the governor,

the Task Force cited a lack of public knowledge as the most significant barrier to combating human trafficking and determined that an education campaign would be critical to the effort.

Human trafficking – the illegal trade of human beings for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor – is one of the fastest growing criminal enterprises worldwide. Each year an estimated 1,078 Ohio children become victims of human trafficking and 3,016 more are at-risk for exploitation.

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