

## LWV Ohio Statehouse Day – March 19, 2013

### LWVO Lobbyist Report

#### Human Trafficking: More to Do

*Karen Rainey, Advocate*

LWV Ohio's newest program position outlines the many areas where action is needed to protect the victims of human trafficking in our state. While Ohio has made significant progress in enacting legislation that deals with human trafficking (also known as modern-day slavery), there is still much to be done.

The "Safe Harbor" bill (HB 262) passed with overwhelming bipartisan support last session. It took a victim-centered approach, and accomplished several objectives: It established a diversion program for trafficked youth to provide them with treatment, counseling and other services needed to help them heal and to keep them out of the juvenile justice system; it provided for the expungement of prior records; it created a civil remedy so that victims can sue their traffickers. Additionally, the bill requires that all law enforcement be trained to recognize and deal with trafficking as a part of their peace officer training. The bill also increases penalties for trafficking, and buyers of sex with minors are required to register as sex offenders if convicted.

However, in order to gain support, certain compromises were made in the bill. The most problematic is that 16- and 17-year-olds are not treated in the same way as younger victims. We can expect an effort to bring Ohio's law into agreement with the federal law, which defines all minors under 18 as victims and entitled to the same legal protections.

We can expect new legislation to address trafficking issues this session. Rep. Teresa Fedor, the champion of the legislation, has several additions in mind, including the termination of parental rights when parents are trafficking their children. A key focus will be on demand reduction—working to deter the johns from purchasing services. There is also a need to fund victim services, as prescribed in last year's trafficking bill. This fund is to be under the auspices of the Department of Job and Family Services.

As of this writing, the only legislation introduced this session (by Rep. Fedor) is House Resolution 19, a request that Congress authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2013 and subsequent years to fund the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act, something that Congress failed to do for the fiscal year 2012.

**The Message:** Watch for new legislation to be introduced later this session. Meanwhile, consult the LWV Ohio web site, [www.lwvohio.org](http://www.lwvohio.org), for activities that support the anti-trafficking movement in Ohio. You can find them on the human trafficking page under the Advocacy section.