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## News Releases

JANUARY 31, 2011 BUFFALO, NY

### ICE and U.S. Attorney partner to promote human trafficking and forced labor enforcement efforts

BUFFALO, N.Y. - Human trafficking is a horrific crime in both the United States and around the world. According to U.S. Government estimates, more than 12 million persons globally are subjected to trafficking or exploitive circumstances. The United Nations estimates human trafficking is a multi billion dollar per year criminal enterprise worldwide.

In a concerted effort to promote public awareness of the threat of human trafficking and forced labor, federal law enforcement agencies came together in Buffalo to discuss unified enforcement efforts to attack these criminal organizations who attempt to enslave innocent victims.

The public event was hosted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of New York at Buffalo State College. The goal of the event was to highlight the issue of human trafficking, increase public awareness of ICE's mission and enforcement efforts and to enhance the dialogue between ICE and members of the public service associations, universities, and attorneys who provide assistance to immigrant communities in Western New York.

"Around the globe, ICE's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) is dedicated to detecting and dismantling criminal organizations that reap enormous profits on the backs of innocent victims forced into virtual slave like conditions," said Lev Kubiak, special agent in charge of ICE HSI in Buffalo. "ICE partners with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies and community groups here and in foreign countries to bring to justice criminals who exploit people by stealing their basic human rights and freedom. To this end, it is important that the public and those that provide assistance to immigrant communities also fully understand ICE's mission."

"If there's one thing true in the 21st Century, it's that the world has become a very small place. This is especially true when it comes to immigration-related issues," said U.S. Attorney Hochul. "In Western New York, we have immigrants from throughout the world right here in our community. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers, meanwhile, conduct investigations out of the Buffalo office that involve people and countries located throughout the world. In both instances, collaboration among law enforcement, community leaders, non-governmental organizations and university faculty and students are vitally important as we seek to return Western New York to the prominence it once held. For these reasons, I applaud the Buffalo ICE office for a program that was very worthwhile."

The meeting was attended by law enforcement officials, advocacy groups, and academics along with representatives of U.S. Senator Kristen Gillibrand's and Congressman Christopher Lee's offices.

"I appreciate representatives from ICE coming to Buffalo today to discuss the joint enforcement efforts by the agency and the U.S. Attorney for Western New York to combat the growing trend of human trafficking," said Congressman Chris Lee (NY-26). "Today's event was an opportunity for the public to learn how ICE is partnering with local officials and organizations to combat this troubling trend, and I appreciate the efforts of ICE and U.S. Attorney Hochul to confront this important issue head-on."

ICE officials also explained the Department of Homeland Security's Blue Campaign, a agency wide initiative to combat human trafficking through enhanced public awareness, victim assistance programs, and law enforcement training and initiatives. The campaign encompasses a wide range of programs designed to engage to the American and global public; the Department's federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement partners; non-profit and non-governmental organizations; and governments around the world.

In addition, ICE officers discussed the agency's mission and presented information on a number of enforcement and community outreach programs.

Michael T. Phillips, director of the ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) office in Buffalo also made presentations on the mission of ICE ERO in Western New York. Phillips said, "Today's event was an effort to further foster an environment of open communication between ICE's various entities and the NGO and advocate community. All parties involved are best served when we are able to maintain an open dialogue regarding our respective missions."

"We view this outreach and information session as a unique opportunity to not only learn about the many facets of ICE but to also have access to a vast array of supervisory staff responsible for directing this often time confusing maze of immigration enforcement," said Joanne Macri, director of Criminal Defense Immigration Project for the New York State Defenders Association. "We wish to express our gratitude to Director Phillips for providing this forum as we look forward to a continuing relationship open communication with the Buffalo SAC and ERO."

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