

Bob Weiner & Zach Filtz: *Vegas, Nation Could Shine Image by Fighting Human Trafficking, Epidemic Worse from Covid-19, OpEdNews #2 national oped*

Former White House Drug Policy Spokesman Robert Weiner and Zach Filtz, senior policy analyst for Robert Weiner Associates and Solutions for Change, have published an article in OpEdNews (H2 when came out, the site's #2 lead op-ed nationally, "Las Vegas Could Shine Image by Fighting Human Trafficking, Epidemic Made Worse by Covid 19." The authors contended, "Hotels Give Wink and Nod, Millions of Young Girls' Lives at Stake" in the state and the nation as a whole. Weiner and Filtz name the hotel chains in several lawsuits under the national mega-radar screen.

Weiner and Filtz say that it's "a situation made even worse with Coronavirus (Covid-19). Hotel chains have shown that a wink and a nod are just fine with them, enabling destruction of young girls' lives. In addition, .they are not revealing information regarding specifics or even statistics of customers and clients interacting with COVID-19-positive people. Now, researchers in China found that Coronavirus can be prevalent in semen in men who are still infected or recovering from COVID-19, with findings published in the medical journal JAMA Network Open."

Weiner and Filtz continue, "While Las Vegas already makes prostitution unlawful (yet violates its own protocols with a wink and nod like the hotels), the state of Nevada lets the counties choose to outlaw it. Currently, there are six counties and a city where prostitution is not legal: Clark County (which contains Las Vegas), Douglas, Eureka, Lincoln, Pershing, Washoe (contains Reno) and the independent city of Carson City (the state capitol). However, Elko, Humboldt, Lyon, and White Pine Counties all allow brothels in at least parts of their counties. We question why this is not a statewide prohibition."

They go on, "According to the Polaris Project, Nevada ranks as the #2 state for human trafficking cases per capita at ten victims per 100,000 citizens. . Human trafficking with sex trafficking occurs in every state as well as Washington, D.C. Human trafficking is actually the worst in Washington, D.C. (must be lists of politicians in many black books), but Nevada is #1 among the states. Statistics from the Polaris Project as the largest and most comprehensive data and advocacy center documents 11,000 cases of human trafficking and 23,000 individual survivors."

They point out, "In 2018, Nevada experienced 313 cases of human trafficking - federal law defines the term that can be defined as the use of force, fraud, or coercion to lure a person to be taken into captivity for commercial labor or sex purposes without family or friends knowing. Las Vegas itself saw 264 of all human trafficking cases."

They assert, "There is some hope in the form of a likely settlement: Victims have begun to fight back against the powerful hotel companies that have long covered up heinous sexual crimes happening behind closed doors. They are no longer tolerating passive "cooperation" with their traffickers."

"Victims are represented in two separate federal suits, as well as a motion to consolidate cases from 21 states. The first of the two federal suits, filed in U.S. District Court in the District of New Hampshire, lists InterContinental Hotels Group, Wyndham Hotels and Resorts, Best Western International, and Marriott International as the defendants, and a victim identified as 'K.B.' as plaintiff. The second federal suit was filed in the U.S. District Court in the Northern District of Texas against Best Western, Hyatt, and Red Lion Hotels.

They continue, "A motion in federal court in Ohio by New York law firm Weitz and Luxenberg to consolidate 21 multi-district cases currently include Georgia, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Washington state, and Nevada. Victims from other states could be included in this class action suit. Defendants for the state cases include Choice Hotels, Extended Stay America, Hilton, and

smaller hotels and motels. The list is like a who's who of the hotel industry. So far, 1,500 victims have retained counsel, and 7,000 victims could be represented over time.”

Hotels and sex trafficking are closely linked. Polaris reports 74% of all trafficking victims state that hotels were used while they were being trafficked. This includes locations where the activities are illegal.”

The clandestine nature of human trafficking makes it difficult to determine the number of incidents per year, but it is at least in the ‘thousands’ according to Polaris.”

U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), back in the news after his endorsement of Joe Biden for President, called his home state legislature ‘a bunch of cowards’ after they failed to decriminalize prostitution." For as much good as Reid has done for the state and nation, this is exactly the wrong direction to go.”

Weiner and Lasky report, “Polaris, establisher of the National Human Trafficking Hotline identifies this list of suspicious signs of human trafficking:

- Presence of third party (pimp/trafficker) monitoring a hallway or door
- Guest overly concerned with surveillance cameras or entrance policies
- Someone dropped off who visits for 30 minutes - 1 hour - or waits for that person on property or in parking lot
- Abandoned or locked out young adults on property
- Flyers that detail suspicious sales tactics”

Weiner and Filtz conclude, “There is real opportunity for change. End winking-and-nodding . It is. time for all hotel chains - as well as smaller hotels -- to introduce strict policies identifying and stopping suspected sex trafficking going on in their rooms. We hope there is oversight against giving such locations PPP's -- payroll protection from Congress-- for allowing human trafficking. Bystanders who come into contact with traffickers must not turn a blind eye. .It's time for justice to run its course. Call the local authorities and report it. There must be bipartisan legislative work and law enforcement action to protect against prostitution as well as punishment of the traffickers -- and the key enablers, including the hotels."

Link: <http://www.weinerpublic.com/20200624.pdf>