



Rep. Tom Emmer on Emmer: Human trafficking is a global crisis

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HOST:

I now would like to turn to the gentleman from Minnesota, Representative Emmer. He's from Minnesota's 6th Congressional District and is a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committees on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations and the Western Hemisphere. As part of his responsibility through his committee work, Mr. Emmer works closely with the committee to oversee federal agencies, international organizations and NGOs to discuss and to improve governmental responses to human trafficking. With that, I will yield four minutes to the representative from Minnesota.

REP. TOM EMMER:

I want to thank my colleagues, Congresswoman Kristi Noem and Congresswoman Anne Wagner for their leadership here tonight. Nearly a year ago, Boko Haram terrorists in Nigeria kidnapped more than 200 teenage girls with the intent of selling them off into slavery. This crime against humanity sparked international outrage, but a distracted world soon turned their attention and their backs on these young women. Unfortunately, this was not an isolated tragedy in some faraway nation. We are in the midst of a global crisis. On every continent and in every nation, millions of human beings are sold and enslaved, forced into labor and prostitution against their will. In the United States alone, hundreds of thousands are trapped by transnational drug cartels and criminal organizations. The Justice Department estimates there are more than 200,000 children across the U.S. at risk of trafficking. Human trafficking is a \$30 billion per year enterprise with thousands trafficked annually. This is not just an American problem, but there is work that we can do at home to combat this growing problem. Congress must do everything within its power and authority to ensure that resources and judicial tools are being used to improve prosecutions, protect victims and prevent future trafficking. Thankfully, we are not starting with nothing. One way we can combat trafficking is through safe harbor laws that have been instituted across the country, including my home state of Minnesota. I'd like to thank my colleague, Senator Amy Klobuchar, for her leadership on protecting victims and assisting prosecutors by forwarding safe harbor laws at the national level. Her leadership, and with the support of countless others, including especially my colleagues John Klein and Eric Paulson, comes from an ongoing effort from everyday Minnesotans looking to make an impact and rescue young men and women trapped in the sex trade. There is also an existing network of organizations that provide services to victims of trafficking that are both life-altering and life-saving. In my district, three such organizations stand out. Breaking Free and Heartland Girls Ranch help women escape sexual exploitation through housing, mental health support and education. The Link in Carver County provides support programs to youth and families to combat homelessness and works with at-risk children to help them reach their full potential. Organizations like these are vital in the fight against trafficking. They make a real difference and their efforts should be celebrated. Congress will take important votes tomorrow to streamline agency processes and responses and improve the effectiveness of grant awards and expand the scope of outreach and child protection initiatives. To our collective shame, the tragedy of human trafficking persists. The words spoken tonight and the votes cast in this chamber tomorrow cannot merely be symbolic gestures. They must be



followed by action and constant vigilance. Our children deserve nothing less. And with that, I yield back.

HOST:

I thank the gentleman for his words and for his actions and the actions that we will be taking here on the

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For questions or corrections: mn06watch@gmail.com