



Public Remarks to U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Terry FitzPatrick | ATEST Director | May 2025

Thank you for the invitation to speak today.

And thank you for working to end human trafficking and forced labor.

This year marks a quarter-century of progress in the anti-trafficking field.

The United Nations Palermo Protocol, and the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act, are both 25 years old.

They were both approved in late 2000.

These landmark achievements created the “3-P” framework that we’re all familiar with – prevention, prosecution, and protection.

And at the federal level in the U.S., that 3-P framework has helped create the world’s most comprehensive, whole-of-government approach to ending trafficking and forced labor.

It is a model for the world.

America can be proud of what’ve built, together, as a nation.

That’s what I’d like to focus on today—the urgent need to preserve the offices, programs and funding that make those three mutually-reinforcing provisions work effectively.

My coalition, the Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST), is a coordinating council for many of the major nonprofits that educate Congress and the administration how to achieve a whole-of-government approach.

ATEST includes the largest trafficking shelters and service providers in the U.S....

- **...as well as organizations that help businesses source materials that aren't tainted by forced labor...**
- **...and help police be more effective...**
- **...and train doctors to recognize the signs of a trafficking victim in their office...**
- **...and help runaway and homeless youth avoid traffickers...**
- **...and train community leaders how to build social and economic resilience to reduce vulnerability to traffickers.**

Our member organizations work in more than 30 U.S. cities and 100 countries.

And we've worked with businesses on the Chamber's Task Force.

That's why we stress that the way to end trafficking and forced labor is to confront it on many fronts.

I urge you to look at ATEST's recommendations to the Trump Transition Team for the 8 key agencies where most anti-trafficking work is concentrated:

- **Justice...**
- **Labor...**
- **State...**
- **Homeland Security...**
- **Health and Human Services...**
- **USAID...**
- **Education...**

- **And the Executive Office of the President...**
 - **including the Office of Management and Budget**
 - **U.S. Trade Representative**
 - **and the Office of Federal Procurement Policy**

This in-depth Transition Memorandum is on the policy page of our website, endslaveryandtrafficking.org

...or email me and I'll be happy to shoot you a .pdf

My business cards are on the info table.

One reason a comprehensive approach is so important is that it helps more than the individuals who are targeted by traffickers.

It also helps businesses.

It's not charity.

It's a good investment.

Your company, your customers, your employees, and your investors are all potential trafficking victims too.

Domestically, forced labor is an unfair business practice that allows criminals to undercut companies who don't enslave their workers.

Internationally, it's an unfair trade practice, where countries that allow or even encourage forced labor undercut the U.S. in global commerce.

I'm sure you know all this, but on anniversary dates like the 25th birthday of the Trafficking Act, it's important to reaffirm these truths.

And make sure policymakers know them too.

There's a widespread lack of understanding: many think trafficking is primarily about sexual exploitation and migration, and it's not. It's mostly forced labor.

Early proposals from the administration could severely hamper America's whole-of-government approach.

Three major cuts could affect businesses.

- **First Cut:**

- **The International Labor Affairs Bureau at the Department of Labor (ILAB) may have its entire grantmaking portfolio eliminated.**
- **The bureau will likely continue to create its Child Labor Report, and the list of tainted goods prohibited from import into the U.S.**
- **But it might not have funding to do much about the problems it uncovers.**
- **The work ILAB does to help American businesses avoid tainted raw materials requires more than publishing reports.**
- **It requires grantmaking to governments, businesses and civil society organizations that are working on the front lines to solve the problem.**

- **Second Cut:**

- **The Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons at the State Department (JTIP) may also have its grantmaking budget eliminated.**
- **The office may also be diminished in stature as part of the State Department's reorganization.**
- **JTIP would likely continue to publish its Trafficking in Persons Report, which is a remarkable tool that any business can use to evaluate the risks of sourcing from, or operating in, any country on Earth.**
- **But there would be no funding to tackle the problems the report uncovers.**

- **And if JTIP is subsumed into another State Department bureau, it could lose the independence it needs to produce reliable Tier Rankings and Country Narratives that U.S. businesses can rely on.**

- **Third Cut:**
 - **The elimination of the Counter Trafficking in Persons program at the U.S. Agency for International Development (CTIP).**
 - **This office integrates anti-trafficking strategies and activities into international economic development, disaster assistance, and humanitarian aid programs.**
 - **Perhaps in the State Department's proposed absorption of USAID, the concept of anti-trafficking integration could be included.**
 - **We hope so, because forced labor is a barrier that prevents any development program from reaching beneficiaries.**

One of government's critical roles is to create an enabling environment for business.

But the cuts at ILAB, JTIP, and CTIP – if they are ultimately allowed by Congress and the courts – would be major setbacks in achieving that goal.

- **One:**
 - **They are coming just as researchers have calculated the economic benefits of ending forced labor.**
 - **You may have seen the U.N. report last October that included a first-of-its kind cost-benefit calculation.**
 - **Simply put: ending forced labor will grow global GDP.**
 - **If people get paid instead of working for nothing, or next to nothing, they'll spend that money buying stuff.**

- **And Two:**
 - **Besides America’s 3-P anti-trafficking strategy for government -- prevention, prosecution and protection -- there’s another three-pillar framework.**
 - **That’s the ongoing partnerships we’ve all crafted together over the years involving government, civil society, and business.**
 - **Everyone has a role to play, and government’s role includes coordination and leadership.**
 - **It shouldn’t be that on this 25th birthday of the anti-trafficking movement, the U.S. government is stepping back.**
 - **It will make trafficking and forced labor worse, creating unfair and illegal business competition.**

What Can You Do?

Three Suggestions...

One:

- **Please speak up in whatever way you can as you interact with Congress and the administration about the importance of preserving the whole-of-government approach to America’s trailblazing anti-trafficking work.**
- **That includes funding civil society organizations that combat trafficking, not just having government agencies write reports about it.**

Two:

- **Please consider ATEST to be a resource to business.**
- **Our policy and appropriations recommendations are all public, and we’re happy to discuss ways to build bridges between businesses and civil society.**
- **Some of our member organizations are already partnering with members of the Chamber’s Task Force.**

Three:

- **Involve trafficking survivors as paid consultants when your company is drafting due diligence policies and procedures or creating employee training programs.**
- **And this includes individuals with lived experience of forced labor trafficking.**
- **If you don't know who to call, we can help you with that.**

Whatever you can do, please do it this year. A lot is at stake

A 25th anniversary is a terrible thing to waste.