



Senator Tim Knopp

Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE, S-309
Salem, Oregon 97301

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 28, 2013

CONTACT: Jake Pelroy
503.986.1727

Senator Knopp Joins Forces to Battle Human Trafficking *Teams up with Central Oregon Advocate to Enhance Oregon's Human Trafficking Laws*

Salem, OR – In front of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator Knopp testified on strengthening Oregon human trafficking laws. [Senate Bill 786](#) expands the crime of trafficking to include children and strengthens the penalties for traffickers. Previous legislatures have set the structure for our current human trafficking laws, however recent laws passed in neighboring states and more sophisticated trafficking activity has let Oregon become a haven for trafficking.

“We just can’t allow people to be victimized” Knopp states. “I believe it is in the legislature’s ability to send a clear message, a strong message, that we don’t want you here, you can’t do this to our kids, to our young women, to our boys. This needs to stop!”

A Central Oregon resident, Nita Belles is currently working with Senator Knopp on SB 786 to make sure that the bill properly enhances the laws on the books to combat human trafficking. Nita is the Central Oregon Regional Director for Oregonians Against Trafficking Humans (OATH), which is an extension of the Oregon Human Trafficking Task Force. She is the author of *In Our Backyard* which documents human trafficking in the United States and has been worked in the anti-trafficking movement for seven years.

“In working with law enforcement across our state I have heard their frustration.” Nita Belles continues, “The discouragement that they do not have strong enough laws to be able to effectively fight the crime of human trafficking in their jurisdiction. This is happening not only in our big cities but in Central Oregon, in small towns, Prineville, Madras, Sunriver, Bend, Redmond, Black Butte and many others.”

Sen. Knopp was previously in the Legislature from 1999 to 2005 for three terms, including one as Oregon House Majority Leader. He was appointed to the Education and Workforce Development and Health Care and Human Services committees for the 2013 Legislative Session. Tim was elected to his first term in the Oregon State Senate in November 2012. Senate District 27 encompasses the Central Oregon communities of Bend, Redmond, Sunriver, and Tumalo.

###

Nita Belles can be reached for comment at 541.948.6428.

Video testimony can be viewed at: <http://youtu.be/SF4gxRuolfo>

Attached:

PDF of Press Release

Photo of Nita Belles Testifying