



Senate Republican Office

Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE, S-303
Salem, Oregon 97301

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 28, 2013

CONTACT: Michael Gay
503.986.1955
503.781.8559

Human trafficking legislation close to final adoption

Salem, OR – The State Senate approved final changes to a bill aimed at cracking down on human traffickers Friday. Senate Bill 673 B has had a lengthy and uncertain journey through the legislative process, but is now on its way to final approval in the House of Representatives.

“It hasn’t been easy to get to this point, but I’m pleased with the final bill we passed today,” said Senator Betsy Close (R-Albany/Corvallis), who has been one of the chief legislative advocates for the bill. “I believe because of this bill there are young girls who will never have to deal with the horrors of sex trafficking.”

Senate Bill 673 B criminalizes sex trafficking of a minor, increases sentences for perpetrators, suppliers and facilitators of sex trafficking, provides greater protection for child victims of sex trafficking and gives investigators and prosecutors additional tools. Close was able to protect some key provisions of the bill, such as a first offense felony for soliciting sex with a minor, which at one point were taken out of the bill.

The bill also requires registration as a sex offender on the second offense of soliciting sex with a minor. Close hopes to introduce legislation requiring registration on the first offense next session.

“The issue of sex trafficking is an issue of enslavement and oppression,” said Close. “It is a critical issue, one we must address. We must never become lax or apathetic in protecting the most vulnerable in our world from the most terrible of crimes.”

Oregon recently received a “D” rating in a report card from Shared Hope International, an organization dedicated to fighting sex trafficking. The report outlined several flaws in Oregon’s sex trafficking law.

Starting in 1999, Close served for six years as a State Representative in the Oregon House of Representatives. She was Chairwoman of the House Water & Environment Committee and House Business, Labor, and Consumer Affairs; and Co-Chair of the Joint Natural Resources Committee. She served in leadership as Assistant Majority Leader from 2001 to 2005. She was appointed to the Oregon State Senate in 2012.

Betsy Close has been married to Christopher Close for 41 years. The couple have four grown children.

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