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## **WCAO/RCAO Sex Trafficking Case**

JJC Press Conference Talking Points

March 29, 2017

11:00AM

Good Morning.

I am pleased to be here today with Washington County Attorney Pete Orput to provide public information about a multi-jurisdictional and multi-agency effort to uncover a human trafficking operation that is national - *and International* - in scope with alleged criminal activity happening here regionally in Minnesota and North Dakota.

Criminal complaints have been filed in Washington County against Four Defendants, charging them with Racketeering, Sex Trafficking, Promotion of Prostitution, Concealing Criminal Proceeds and Engaging in the Business of Concealing Criminal Proceeds in connection with a criminal enterprise profiteering off the sale of vulnerable human beings for sex.

Investigators were able to connect this criminal enterprise to numerous victims and thousands – *literally thousands* – of ads for sexual services placed on Backpage.com in 29 different states over the past two years.

The victims in this scheme were brutalized: frequently assaulted, raped, and robbed by customers; forced to “work” 12-14 hours a day and bring in a quota of at least \$800/day for their traffickers.

One of the defendants is in custody in Washington County and the remaining three defendants were apprehended yesterday in California, and are now awaiting extradition to Minnesota.

This joint prosecution is the product of police agencies in the Metro area working together to uncover the facts of a criminal commercial enterprise that sold human beings for sex.

All of our victims are vulnerable foreign Nationals from Asia.

The investigative effort in this case was extraordinary, and included police investigators from Oakdale, Woodbury, Cottage Grove, Saint Paul and Minneapolis.

In addition, this investigative effort was aided by law enforcement officials and prosecutors in Orange County, California.

This effort began with and was led by Washington County Attorney Pete Orput and his dedicated staff in the Washington County Attorney’s Office.

My staff and I are honored to have been asked by Washington County to jointly prosecute this case with them.

As someone who has been deeply involved in the fight against Sex Trafficking in Minnesota, I want to say that this is the most sophisticated human trafficking operation that I have ever seen.

More importantly, this case represents the forward evolution of local law enforcement and prosecution response to human trafficking in the State of Minnesota.

This sophisticated criminal enterprise was taken down by investigative cooperation and partnership (much like what we do in in major drug trafficking cases) and by intentional choices made by local law enforcement leaders to make this issue a top priority. In other words: Leadership.

I want to thank . . . . . those in attendance.

This level of leadership is a precursor to more good things to come from law enforcement and prosecution in combatting human trafficking in our community.

We have come a really long way since February of 2011 when County Attorneys and local law enforcement leaders announced a new victim centered approach and a new focus on investigating and prosecuting traffickers and the buyers.

Later that year, in Special Session the Legislature passed Safe Harbor.

Bi-Partisan Funding for Health and DHS.

## Legislative Appropriation for Police Training and Protocol Development

### Legislative Appropriation for Investigative Grants

The Washington County Attorney's Office is leading the way with their use of a criminal analyst and investigator resources (more of us should be doing this).

We are building infrastructure around our response as we always do.

But, we will not arrest and prosecute our way out of this problem.

We also need to talk about prevention, getting upstream and changing our culture.

None of this happens unless there is a demand.

How we raise boys; and how men define what is acceptable for men matters in order to end the demand.

These are the conversations that all of us need to have, if we want to truly end sex trafficking in our community.

Now, I want to turn it over to Washington County Attorney Pete Orput, who as I said before, is the reason why we are here today and who will talk about the facts that are included in our probable cause statement.

Thank you.