

**NOTE: “With the new law, which Kasich has indicated he will sign, Ohio will move to the forefront of national efforts against human trafficking.”**



Tuesday, June 19, 2012

## **A shift in thinking: editorial**

### ***Ohio takes aim at perpetrators of human trafficking, not its victims***

The unanimous approval last week by lawmakers of Ohio House Bill 262 makes one wonder why it took so long for Ohio to take this clear and enlightened stance on modern slavery and the sexual exploitation of children.

The measure will make human trafficking a first-degree felony and treat children forced into sex slavery as victims rather than prostitutes. In that, it marks an important shift that those who work with victims of prostitution long have called for.

The principle applies to most cases of prostitution: Women in the trade, even adults, often are pressed into it by desperation or drug addiction or force, and making them criminals does nothing to stop the trade or help them escape.

Franklin County Municipal Court Judge Paul M. Herbert came to recognize this and has established a special docket for prostitution cases, through which women who have been arrested and jailed over and over for prostitution can enter a two-year program of group counseling and drug treatment. It has worked wonders, sharply reducing the number of times its participants show up in court again.

When the victims are children, the moral imperative to rescue them and punish those who exploit them is even greater.

Democratic state Rep. Teresa Fedor of Toledo deserves credit for years of advocating for tougher laws against human trafficking and the exploitation of children. She also made the final version of the bill stronger, by insisting on penalties for johns, the people who pay for sex with minors. For the first time, those who knowingly pay for sex with someone who is 16 or 17 years old can be charged with a felony, instead of receiving a lesser charge or going free, while the prostitute goes to jail.

**Editorial continued here: <http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/editorials/2012/06/19/a-shift-in-thinking.html>**

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