



## **MAKING THE GRADE: PROTECTED INNOCENCE INITIATIVE COMES TO TEXAS** ***Grades State's Ability to Protect Its Children from Sex Trafficking***

**Vancouver, WA**—Texas will receive a mediocre “C” grade regarding legislative efforts to combat child sex trafficking, when the Protected Innocence Report Card is released next week in a series of press conferences. Texas’ laws have been analyzed using the Protected Innocence Legislative Framework for the level of protection provided to children in the state from child sex trafficking.

Shared Hope International is proud to stand with Children at Risk, the South Texas Coalition Against Human Trafficking and several other anti-trafficking leaders in Texas to release the Report Card findings. This level of partnership and participation shows the commitment of Texas leaders to continue to work together toward a stronger solution for children. While the Report Card identifies strengths in Texas laws, it also provides legislators and the community with a framework to bridge the existing gaps that currently leave children vulnerable to traffickers.

“Shared Hope has been working in Texas since 2007, and has documented the significant strides taken to protect children. However, the Protected Innocence Report Card shows that we still have work to do regarding the safety of children,” said Linda Smith, Founder and President of Shared Hope International. “Early in our research it was clear that responses to child sex trafficking must originate at the state level. The Protected Innocence Report Card exposes the legislative gaps within Texas that leave children vulnerable to traffickers, failing to provide the cornerstone of strong law to victim advocates, prosecutors and law enforcement so they can ensure protection for the victims and punishment for the criminals who exploit them.”

### **Texas Protected Innocence Report Card Press Conferences**

#### **SAN ANTONIO**

**WHEN:** Tuesday, March 1, 2011  
9 a.m.

**WHERE:** Omni Hotel  
Colonnade Ballroom - 20<sup>th</sup> Floor  
9821 Colonnade Boulevard, San Antonio, TX

**SPEAKERS:** Linda Smith, Founder and President, Shared Hope International  
Mandi Kimball, Director of Public Policy and Government Affairs, Children at Risk  
Melissa Moreno, Director Anti-Trafficking Program, Catholic Charities  
Detective Rene Ochoa, Bexar County Sheriff's Office  
Kirsta Melton, Assistant Criminal District Attorney, Bexar County District Attorney's Office  
Christian Burchell, Founder and CEO, Texas Anti-Trafficking in Persons

#### **AUSTIN**

**WHEN:** Wednesday, March 2, 2011  
9:30 a.m.

**WHERE:** Texas State Capitol  
1100 Congress Avenue, Austin, TX

**SPEAKERS:** Linda Smith, Founder and President, Shared Hope International  
Mandi Kimball, Director of Public Policy and Government Affairs, Children at Risk  
Sen. Leticia Van de Putte (Dist. 26)  
Rep. Senfronia Thompson (Dist. 141)  
Rep. Randy Weber (Dist. 29)



**HOUSTON**

**WHEN:** Thursday, March 3, 2011  
10 a.m.

**WHERE** Houston City Hall steps  
901 Bagby, Houston, TX

**SPEAKERS:** Linda Smith, Founder and President, Shared Hope International  
Dr. Bob Sanborn, President and CEO, Children at Risk  
Maria Trujillo, Executive Director, Houston Rescue & Restore  
Ed Gonzalez, Houston Vice Mayor Pro-Tem  
Adrian Garcia, Harris County Sheriff

The Protected Innocence Legislative Framework is the legal analysis tool of the Protected Innocence Initiative, a holistic strategy to promote zero tolerance for child sex trafficking. In partnership with the American Center for Law and Justice, Shared Hope International conducted a comprehensive analysis of Oregon's existing laws based on six areas of law critical to protecting and responding to domestic minor sex trafficking. The results of this analysis laid the foundation for the Protected Innocence Report Card, which grades the level of protection in Texas.

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**ABOUT SHARED HOPE INTERNATIONAL:** Shared Hope International was founded in 1998, by former U.S. Congresswoman Linda Smith, and exists to rescue and restore women and children in crisis. We are leaders in a worldwide effort to prevent and eradicate sex trafficking and slavery using a three-pronged strategy: prevent, rescue & restore, and bring justice. For more information about Shared Hope International, and the *Protected Innocence Initiative*, go to [www.sharedhope.org](http://www.sharedhope.org).