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U.S. CONGRESSWOMAN LINDA SMITH CALLS ON U.S. ATTORNEY TO PROSECUTE TAYLOR CASE UNDER TVPA, MANDATORY 10-YEAR SENTENCE

Vancouver, WA -- "If there weren't men like Lawrence Taylor shopping for the innocence of our children, there wouldn't be pimps like Rasheed Davis preying on this girl to bring her to market," said Linda Smith, Founder and President of Shared Hope International.

According to media reports earlier today, former NFL star Lawrence Taylor was in the market for buying sex with a minor, and was arrested today in New York after being accused of raping a 16-year-old. The alleged pimp, Rasheed Davis, was also arrested in this case.

"We call on the U.S. Attorney to prosecute this case, to bring the weight of our federal laws against sex trafficking of children to bear on those who perpetuate the problem through their purchase of commercial sex with children," added Smith, U.S. Congresswoman (WA, 3rd Congressional District, 1994-98). "We need to send a strong message to all buyers and would-be buyers, and those who look up to sports figures that this behavior will not be tolerated."

Children under 18 years old who are used in commercial sex, such as prostitution, are defined as victims of sex trafficking under the federal law, as well as New York state law. There is precedent for U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Preet Bharara, to prosecute this case under the federal trafficking laws. Assistant United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, Cynthia Cordes, the first federal prosecutor to utilize the TVPA to prosecute buyers of commercial sex with minors – sex trafficking – has secured 10 indictments and five guilty pleas from men like Lawrence Taylor – child rapists.

New York law enforcement stated Taylor was being arraigned on state charges of Rape 3, a Class E felony which carries a sentence of up to four years in state prison.

Taylor's defense attorney argued against bail during arraignment Thursday that the likelihood of Taylor serving jail time under the NY state law was "very low," and he speculated before the judge that his client would receive more time for jumping bail than the crime for which he was charged. His attorney unknowingly made a convincing argument for this crime to be prosecuted on the federal level.

If convicted under the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), Taylor would get a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years under the federal sentencing guidelines. This heavier federal sentence sends a strong message that those who buy sex with minors are trafficking our children.

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Shared Hope International's research, published as **The National Report on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: America's Prostituted Children**, found that:

- Demand is the primary driver of sex trafficking.
- At least 100,000 children are used in prostitution every year in the United States.
- The average age of entry into prostitution is 13 years old.
- Prostituted girls are usually controlled by a pimp who recruits them into sex trafficking by posing as a boyfriend, caretaker, and protector.

Shared Hope International conducted investigations in more than a dozen locations throughout the United States and found American children being used in the commercial sex industry. Children who are exploited through prostitution, pornography and sexual entertainment are victims of domestic minor sex trafficking. Due to misidentification, ignorance, or efforts to keep victims safe from traffickers these minors are often labeled as delinquents and placed in detention facilities. The business of sex trafficking of America's youth is flourishing. Growing demand for commercial sex with young, innocent girls and boys is fueled by a glorification of pimping and normalization of sexual exploitation.

ABOUT SHARED HOPE: Shared Hope International, founded in 1998 by U.S. Congresswoman Linda Smith (1994-98), 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 through education and public awareness. Smith also served in the Washington legislature from 1983-94.