

## **Shared Hope International**

### **Linda Smith, Founder and President of Shared Hope International, Joins President Bush for the Signing of HR 972 – Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act: *Strengthening and Expanding Human Trafficking Laws Internationally, Combating Domestic Trafficking***

**Dear Friends –**

**I just returned from the White House where I was a guest of President Bush for the signing of HR 972 (TVPRA). This bill, authored by my good friend Representative Chris Smith, is a breakthrough piece of legislation because it focuses on human trafficking in the United States and those who create the demand for commercial sexual exploitation.**

**HR 972 concludes that, “Every day in the U.S. between 1.3 million to 2.3 million runaway and homeless youth live on the streets.”**

**According to the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless “33% of runaway youth are lured into prostitution within 48 hours of leaving home.” Left vulnerable, these children are then picked up by traffickers and pimped within hours to men in our local communities – your next door neighbor, doctor or friend.**

**We have a serious problem, right here in our backyards. I have decided to no longer use the term “john” or “client” or “customer” to define men who buy sex or exploit a women or child. These men are involved in the torture of a child, rape and pedophilia. We should call them what they are...whether it is a businessman at a convention in Atlanta, a tourist buying into the sexual tolerance of Las Vegas, a soldier seeking rest and relaxation, or a peacekeeper taking advantage of a local girl in a war torn area. This person has committed a violent crime of torture, rape and assault of a child. They must be held accountable.**

**President Bush stated today “Human traffickers operate with greed and without conscience, treating their victims as nothing more than goods and commodities for sale to the highest bidder. And this bipartisan bill will help expand our efforts to combat this brutal crime that steals innocence and destroys lives. We cannot put the criminals out of business until we also confront the problem of demand. Those who pay for the chance to sexually abuse children and teenage girls must be held to account. So we’ll investigate and prosecute the customers, the unscrupulous adults who prey on the young and the innocent.”**

**With your help, Shared Hope has diligently fought to increase laws to eradicate sex trafficking in the U.S. and around the world and will continue to do so. We have exposed the raw reality of the sex markets in 14 countries, capturing hundreds of hours of interviews of predators and their victims. This groundbreaking footage, combined with the six Next Steps conferences, has served to educate local law enforcement and prosecutors, while increasing public awareness and services for survivors.**

**It is our duty to protect our children.**

**Thank you for your unwavering support. Together we are making a difference - One life at a time.**

**Blessings,  
Linda Smith  
Founder and President  
Shared Hope International**