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Governor Christie On Human Trafficking: It's Not Just About Super Bowl Sunday

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Transcript

Cindy McCain: I want to thank the state of New Jersey, and I want to thank them for being strong on this, but more importantly, looking into the long term on this like I said. Arizona believes the same way. It is a long-term issue. It's not just the Super Bowl. It's not just a large event. It's every day. So, we face the element out there of educating people, making sure that they understand that this is not prostitution. These are victims, and more importantly making sure that they understand that we have to do something, not only to run the traffickers out first and foremost, but to take care of our victims in the long run. Thank you all for being here and for participating in this. This is an important issue and your interest means a lot to us. It really does. The one person that inspired me long term on this and the one person that I had always wanted to meet on this issue is the next person I'm going to introduce, and that is Senator Chiesa. Very strong on this issue, as you know, a pioneer in terms of getting people to understand it, to listen to it, and more importantly someone who's in it for the long haul. I'm just proud to call him my friend, so with that I'd like to introduce to you Senator Chiesa.

Senator Jeff Chiesa: One of the things I think we should start doing on this issue is start to call human trafficking what it is, and that's modern-day slavery. Because what happens is the victims of these crimes are either lied to, threatened, or forced into a situation that they wouldn't otherwise find themselves in. They have their innocence stolen, they have their ability to trust people removed from them, and in some instances they can be doubly punished because when we come on these crime scenes sometimes as a law enforcement community we believe that they're also criminals if they're engaged in conduct that would otherwise be illegal, but they're forced to do it. And so, with the Governor's

leadership when he was the US Attorney, working with my colleagues at the US Attorney's Office and talking about this issue. 18 months ago while I was the Attorney General we issued a directive, and the directive was designed to lay down long-term stakes in this state so that we would be better prepared to address this crime and better prepared to prosecute it. We knew that the Super Bowl would give us an opportunity to talk about it and highlight it, which is great. But, the Super Bowl will leave here on Monday morning and human trafficking will not. The victims will still be here, the predators will still be here, and we need to be prepared to deal with them long term. And so what I'm very proud of is the continuing efforts of the Acting Attorney General Hoffman and the Governor and my friends who are prosecutors in this area and all over the state, who we're continuing to make sure that we combat this crime, continuing to make sure that we sentence these people for what they're doing. They're stealing the innocence from people who have a right to live in this country freely and to enjoy the same liberties that all of us do. And so that's why this is such an important issue. That's why having a national leader like Cindy McCain come up here and talk about it is such a great thing. That's why when I was in the Senate I had a chance to talk to her husband and others so that they could all continue this fight in a way that's going to make it meaningful and long term. We can all talk about it. People like me can talk about it, but it takes real courage to come up here when you've been victimized by it. And so our next speaker Lexie Smith is going to come up here and share some of her thoughts and give a face to what really us a horrid crime.

Lexie Smith: Harriet Tubman said: "I freed a thousand slaves, and I could have freed a thousand more if they knew they were slaves." You see, there are no stereotypes when it comes to victims, traffickers, or pimps. My name is Lexie Smith. I'm 22 years old and a recent graduate, and I have something to say. I grew up in a middle class suburban Chicago. I have a protective and loving mother and father. Yet, I was exploited at a very young age. My story begins at the age of 2 with an opportunistic cousin addicted to pornography, and I was his sexual experiment. He trained me well for the adolescent pedophile. He would come into my life by the age of 10 through the careful coordination of a family member receiving things in exchange for turning a blind eye. Conditioned, threatened, silenced, and ashamed. This continued for 10 years from the age of 2 to 12. The details of this life-altering event is something that I don't have the time to share, but I will tell you this: the moment I was first raped at the age of 6 everything changed. The true torment goes beyond their touch, because the chains of modern-day slavery are in the mind, not on the hands and feet. Although the chains may be invisible to the naked eye, they can still be seen, sensed, and known. I remember seeing a concerned look in the eyes of my family, friends, and teachers, but because no one knew what to say or how to say it no one said anything at all, so it continued. Dozens of people had the opportunity to show me that I was not made to be a sexual commodity for men. It only takes one to save one, yet not one stood by me. I had to find strength to get help for myself, but it was almost too late. The damage is long lasting emotionally and physically. I honestly don't know how I made it, but because I have, my life is completely dedicated to eradicating modern-day slavery. That is why I am here with Tracy Thompson, sharing my story in schools with say something assembly, to empower student to speak up for one another and let the ones that were late know that healing is possible, and there was so much more than the messages the world has sent them. My name is Lexie Smith. I am a survivor abolitionist, who refuses to regard the abusers in this country with silence, something they rely on to flourish. Until everyone is free, I will speak up. The greatest abolitionist in the world, William Wilberforce once said: "You can turn the other way, you can never again say that you did not know." Thank you.

Governor Chris Christie: I'm glad all of you are here to hear that, and so am I. Unfortunately for those of us who have worked on these cases, that's not the first time we've heard a story like that, but every time you hear it, you can't imagine the torment and the pain that someone like Lexie has gone through in her life. And it's extraordinarily courageous for her to be out here fighting this fight now and she's living the words that she's spoken. She's not going to let this define her. More importantly, she's going to try to do everything she can to make sure it doesn't happen to someone else, and that's pretty extraordinary. Personally, I think we can give her another round of applause. She deserves it. In the state of New Jersey, there is one person who is primarily responsible for law enforcement and who, despite what anyone else may claim this weekend, this guy's working. This is a working weekend for the Attorney General. The idea of having this type of event in our state means that the person who's in charge of law enforcement in this state needs to continue to be vigilant right through until everyone who's come here to come and enjoy the game, leaves here, and hopefully leaves here safely, and happy. I'm confident that we have the right person in that position, and so I want to introduce for some remarks the Attorney General John Hoffman.

Attorney General John Hoffman: As I speak to you, right this very second, we are carrying out undercover operations designed to identify and stop sex slavery, to aggressively prosecute those who are involved, and to provide comfort and aid to the victims. And to restore to them the dignity and respect that has been so callously, and indifferently stripped away from them. Aside from all of these undercover stings and operations that we are doing, we're also going to rollout a very aggressive anti-trafficking outreach campaign and awareness campaign. We have a duty to do everything in our power to lift the rock that human trackers operate. To stop them from enslaving their victims, many of them are our children, and put them behind bars – for as the Governor said, for as long as possible.

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