

Jordan Cunningham doesn't just preach against human trafficking — he fights it

By By Andrea Seastrand

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Imagine your sons or daughters are lured away by manipulative strangers and taken against their will. Imagine they are transported out of the area far away from any family or friends and then forced to do unspeakable things to make a profit for their human traffickers. This nightmare is a reality for too many people across California and the United States. It's estimated by the Global Slavery Index that there are [403,000 victims of human trafficking](#) living in slave conditions in the US.

The problem is so bad that it has become one of the greatest moral issues of our time.

Human trafficking is the modern-day equivalent of slavery and goes against everything we should stand against as a free society, but apparently not everyone thinks ending it should be a top priority. In a recent debate, Democrat Bill Ostrander, who is challenging Jordan Cunningham for our local Assembly seat, said human trafficking isn't really that important because it only affects a handful of people.

Ostrander was looking to score some political points by going after [Cunningham's accomplishments](#) on battling human trafficking and [said](#), "His campaign boasts its compassionate work on human trafficking and how it's the moral issue of our time. But I would like to know, is there anyone here that is actually for human trafficking? No one. Human trafficking affects about 2 hundredths of one percent of our state's population."

This statement is absurd at so many levels.

Mr. Ostrander would do well to understand that it's not enough to say you are against human trafficking. There is a moral obligation to do something to stop it, and that's exactly what Cunningham has done while serving in the Legislature. Perhaps Ostrander shares a similar view with his Democratic colleagues in Sacramento who don't exactly have a stellar record of taking action against trafficking as we saw earlier this year when [Cunningham's bill](#) to deter demand for underage minors was killed on a party-line vote. If Ostrander manages to somehow win the seat, he will apparently fit right in with the warped thinking of Sacramento.

Taking on human trafficking is an ultimate social justice issue because traffickers often target the most vulnerable young people who are forgotten by society.

Figures from the [National Foster Youth Institute](#) illustrate this and are striking because it shows how widespread the problem is. They estimate that 60 percent of child sex trafficking victims rescued during FBI operations in 2013 were formerly in a foster care system. They also note that the average age for girls entering the sex trade is 12. Trafficking affects over 100,000 children each year, according to the FBI.

By standing up to human trafficking, Cunningham is working to protect at-risk children too often neglected by policymakers in the halls of power.

If Democrats really care about social justice, they should recognize the importance of ending modern-day slavery. What Ostrander was essentially saying is that these young people don't matter because they are such a small part of general population.

We need to categorically reject that kind of thinking.

Human trafficking is a problem right here in our community because of our high levels of tourism and central location. District Attorney Dan Dow [started a task force](#) in 2016 dedicated to the issue because the problem had gone undetected for so long. There are victims right in our backyard that need help and there is a moral obligation to take action.

It's going to take continued focused leadership from law enforcement, local leaders and elected officials to stamp out the problem.

While human trafficking may only directly affect a minority of people, the victims are some of the most vulnerable people in our society and are enslaved in the most horrific conditions imaginable. Ostrander may not think that's worth making it a priority. I would wager most reasonable people would disagree.

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