Human Trafficking 101: A Conversation with Mrs. Cindy McCain and Ernie Allen

[applause]

Claire Sechler Merkel: Thank you, Paris. Welcome, everyone. I am Claire Merkel. I am the Director of Arizona Initiatives for the McCain Institute. I am just delighted to welcome each of you here tonight for the first in what we hope to be a seven or eight-piece series on human trafficking.

You can see the titles we have up on the billboards here. We're excited to get started this evening with Ernie Allen. Before we get started, I get to have just a couple of minutes to tell you about some of the exciting things that are going on in human trafficking, here in Arizona, with Mrs. McCain and the Institute.

First of all, I get to announce that we have a new partnership with ASU and Demand Abolition, which is an organization that is run by former ambassador Swanee Hunt. The program will look at demand in Arizona and first do a baseline study. After that, the goal is to reduce demand in Arizona by 20 percent in two years, which I think is a very laudable goal. We are lucky enough...

[applause]

Claire: Yay. [claps] You can clap. Lucky enough to have our project coordinator, Angie Bayless, with us tonight. If you all have questions about that, please see her.

In addition, Lindsay and I just came from a meeting with the Department of Homeland Security Blue Campaign, which is something that the Arizona Governor's Human Trafficking Council is partnering with.

I learned a fact there today that I didn't know, and it was exciting. The city of Phoenix and the Governor's office in Arizona are the very first state governments to partner with the federal Department of Homeland Security on the Blue Campaign.

Once again, Arizona is first. I will say over the last several years, Arizona has done more than most states to improve the situation for victims and human trafficking.

The woman who's about to come out here tonight needs no introduction. She is an incredible humanitarian who has done work all over the world, in a number of realms but, tonight, we're focusing on her work on human trafficking.

She's been working on it for years. She has been the Co-Chair of, first, the Governor's Human Trafficking Task Force and then the Human Trafficking Council. I am looking at the audience and realizing that the first thing I was supposed to do was to recognize the VIPs that are here tonight, those that are on the council with her.

With that, members of the Governor's Human Trafficking Task Force and Council that are
with us tonight are Representative Doug Coleman, Sarah Suggs...

[applause]

Claire: ...Dominique Roe-Sepowitz. Carolyn Jones RSVPed, but I don't see Carolyn tonight. These are the folks that spend a lot of their time working on improving the situation for Arizona. As you know, the new law that went into effect this year gives us a great groundwork, a lot of improvements and room to grow.

Back to Cindy McCain. She's been doing this for a long time. She's incredibly dedicated to this topic. I think we're very fortunate to have an opportunity to listen to she and Ernie Allen, who is pretty much the father of the work against human trafficking and child exploitation, tonight. With that and without further ado, please help me welcome Cindy McCain and Ernie Allen.

[applause]

Cindy McCain: My name's on my seat. I found it OK.

[laughter]

Cindy: Thank you. [laughs] Thank you all. I know there's an accident on 51 or on I-10 or something tonight, so I appreciate all of you weeding through that and coming out here tonight.

This is, I'm sure you were told, the first in a series of conversations that we're going to be having nationally, on this issue. It is, as you know, an issue that is new to the forefront, in terms of visibility and the option to hear about it in Arizona, but it is not new to the forefront nationally or internationally.

The person I have next to me tonight, that we are so fortunate to have with us, is the gold standard on what you do to begin work on trafficking, to work on trafficking, to solve the issue of trafficking and to simply make people understand what is right.

I am so honored that you are here. When you said yes to come to tonight, I thought, "Oh, my gosh. How can I talk to this man? He is so incredible on this issue."

What we thought we would do first is I'll let him introduce himself to you. I know you know his name and know who he is, but we're going to take you on a little journey tonight. It's Human Trafficking 101. Pretend this is a class that you're not being graded in, tonight.

[laughter]

Cindy: We're going to take you on a journey, the beginning journey of understanding human trafficking, what it is, where we're going, what we intend to do and what we want to do, both nationally and internationally.

The only person that I feel that can really talk from an incredible level like this is, of course, my good friend and our friend to the victims in all of this, and that is Ernie Allen.
Thank you for being here tonight.

Ernie Allen: Thank you. Thank you.

[applause]

Cindy: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

I know that all of you know Ernie's reputation and all, and but I'd like...The question I love asking people when we get together and talk about this issue is...Ernie, I'd like to begin with "How? Why? Why are you here? Why did you get into this issue? What drove you to this?"

Ernie: Cindy, I was in local government in my hometown of Louisville, Kentucky. We were focusing on crimes against children. The head of the county group homes came to see me. He said, "Kids are disappearing from our shelters and group homes and are turning up on the streets, in the child prostitution business."

Social workers basically treated them as AWOLs. They're runaways. Did nothing. The kid's gone. Law enforcement did nothing, because they looked like anybody else's kid. These kids literally became hidden victims. They fell through the cracks.

We created the idea of a multidisciplinary approach, a police/social work team, to try to bridge that gap. We immediately started making arrests and rescuing kids. The media noticed. I got invited to go to Atlanta.

Many of you may remember the tragedy of the missing and murdered children in Atlanta, of '79 to 1981. 26 children, young African-American children, were ultimately murdered, their bodies disposed of in the lakes, the gullies and the rivers around this great American city.

I was invited to go there and consult on the investigation. The Vice President of the United States also went to Atlanta to demonstrate his commitment, which was then George H. W. Bush.

I made a proposal to the Vice President. I said, "This is not about one sick city. This is happening in lots of communities across this country, and America's missed it." He said, "What do you think we ought to do?" I said, "I think you ought to bring together the experts, and you ought to develop a national strategy."

One of the challenges then, 30 years ago, and today, to some extent, is that this is a nation of 50 states that act like 50 separate countries and 18,000 different police departments that don't always communicate with each other. How do you bridge that?

It was also a time in which virtually every police department had a mandatory waiting period. If a kid disappeared, the response would be, "Well, if she doesn't show up in 48, 72 hours, call us back and we'll respond."

I suggested that we bring together national leaders and develop a coordinated national response. One should always be careful about offering one's ideas and suggestions,
because a few months later, I hosted that meeting.

[laughter]

**Ernie:** That was not the plan.

[laughter]

**Ernie:** Members of Congress attended. Law enforcement leaders attended. Victim parents attended. The result of that was a 23-point action agenda, and one of the items in that agenda was the creation of a national center.

It was my idea that it would be an arm of the Justice Department or the FBI, but President Reagan said, "If this is going to work, it needs to be a private organization with a strong partnership with the public sector."

More than you wanted to know, but that's the history. We created that center in 1984 and, I think, have made tremendous progress in the effort to protect America's children, to find missing children, to address the exploitation of children.

Because of a similar national crisis in Belgium, in 1996...A man named Marc Dutroux and a pedophile ring killed a number of Belgian children. Prime Minister of Belgium called me and said, "I'd like to come see your center."

I didn't get many calls from heads of state, so I said, "Sure." He asked us to come to Belgium and help him create a version of our national center in Brussels, which we did.

We began to get calls and requests from other countries around the world so, in 1998, we created a separate international center. That's really been the source.

Our goal was to build systems, to change laws, to build capacity, to train law enforcement, to make systems respond -- recognize and respond -- more effectively to these problems, which are massive, and whose victims remain hidden.

**Cindy:** I can only imagine that through the course of these years, and certainly in the beginning years as you began to uncover each of the layers that deals, that is involved in all of this, that your heart must have been broken. To not only find out what was going on, to figure it out and figure out that at that time we didn't really have an answer for it. Other than to, as you said, "Let's get together. Let's put together a national entity, and let's get people motivated on this."

Was there anything at that particular time that just took your heart and...? I ask this of everybody, because I know humanitarian work begins with the heart [inaudible 11:08].

**Ernie:** Everything. There were so many tragedies and talking to these families. What's worse is not just the loss of a child, not just the victimization of a child, but the sense of powerlessness, and the sense that the systems that are supposed to be protective, the systems that are supposed to work for these families didn't work.

There is nothing worse than the loss of a child. Unfortunately, particularly in those early
days, we saw it over and over and over again.

**Cindy:** Can you, since this is Human Trafficking 101 tonight, give us your definition of human trafficking?

**Ernie:** Currently, in the United States, the definition is derived from the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. It does not require physical movement. If the victim is a child, it does not require force, fraud or coercion.

**Cindy:** Which is something people don't really understand.

**Ernie:** They really don't understand. But what it is is the commoditization of a human being. It is 21st-century slavery. It is the use of human beings for profit, whether it is for sex or for forced labor or for something else, and it is big business in the world today. It's big business because it's easy, it is low-risk and it's enormously profitable.

**Cindy:** You can sell...I tell people, when I go out, you can sell a gun or drugs once but you can sell a child over and over and over again. It's tragic.

**Ernie:** You never exhaust the commodity. It really is. What we've said from the beginning is we have to destroy the business model. We have to increase the risk and eliminate the profitability. I don't have any delusions that the organized criminals who are behind it will not just simply adjust and adapt and engage in some other insidious, illegal enterprise. But that's still progress.

**Cindy:** Many times, and I have heard it described this way to some degree as well. This is also a very basic human rights violation. As someone who works on human rights a great deal around the world, I view this as one of the most insulting things that we can do to someone, is to violate their basic human rights. Particularly, the human rights of a child.

I believe it's also child abuse. I'm always a little cramped, a little bit not understanding why more governments or more states don't address it as such, as child abuse. I know that many states have a problem with that.

But I also believe that, with the work that you have done, that people are beginning to understand that children do have rights. They do have basic human rights and that they are being abused when this occurs, even if they're not being moved across borders. I want to thank your organization for making that very clear to many of us who work in the field a great deal.

**Ernie:** It is a fundamental violation of human rights, but the greatest challenge, the reason why it's taken so long and while even today it is difficult, is that the public doesn't understand it.

What I hear over and over again across the country is, "Yeah, human trafficking. That's a problem somewhere else, on the other side of the world. It's a problem in Southeast Asia. It's a problem in Central America or Eastern Europe. It's certainly not a problem in my
community."

Well, it is. Even within the United States, what we hear is, "Well, yeah, that's a problem of foreign nationals brought into the country for this purpose."

What I want to make sure that people understand is that, overwhelmingly, the victims of human trafficking in the United States are American kids. These are kids who primarily are runaways or throwaways or homeless kids, who are targeted out of the child welfare system. But these are American kids from American families.

I attended a meeting not long ago in Atlanta, in which a prominent businessman told me a story. He lived in an Atlanta suburb -- a sleepy, quiet Atlanta suburb -- and a kid down the street, who was 12 years old, used to babysit for his children. This was three or four years ago. He told me last year she was rescued as a trafficking victim.

This happens to all kinds of kids in all kinds of places. This is not just the province of the poorest of the poor and the kids who are absolutely the most vulnerable. There's vulnerability across the spectrum.

Cindy: Are these kids kidnapped or are they...how are they recruited?

Ernie: Most of them initially leave home voluntarily. Again, most of them are kids in crisis. They have problems in their family. They are vulnerable. A lot of them run away. But what happens is, if you're a 14-year-old or a 13-year-old on the streets of an American city, you have to figure out how to survive.

Therefore they are easy marks for the people who prey upon them, and the principal lure that these people use is the lure of kindness, friendship, sustenance. A place to live, a place to stay, even love. But, at some point, what they learn is that they can't walk away. They've lost the ability to fend for themselves. This is really insidious.

The other really focal point of all of this is the American child welfare system. Just a major case in Miami a year ago, in which traffickers targeted their victims out of foster care. The foster care system in this country, the child welfare system in this country is overwhelmed and these are particularly vulnerable victims.

The other thing that's a real challenge, the latest Justice Department research on the number of runaways in this country is about 1.7 million kids a year. This is a huge issue. 1.3 million of those kids are gone for at least 24 hours to six months. That's the target population. These are the kids who don't run and go back home. These are the kids who have to survive on the streets.

Now, they may have friends. They may have places to stay. But a bunch of them don't. As a result, the traffickers target them. They watch for them. They go to where those kids are. They win their confidence.

Cindy: Places like what? Where do they go?

Ernie: Like bus stations, train stations, places...
Cindy: Malls?

Ernie: Malls, where kids hang out. There was a story here in Phoenix several years ago, in which a kid was approached in a mall, a young teen, and told how pretty she was and told that she would have a great career as a model. They set up a so-called photo shoot. This kid was tricked and ended up trafficked up and down the West Coast of the United States.

These guys are good. They manipulate these kids through kindness, through friendship, through love. Also, through drugs and violence. The damage that's done to these kids is enormous and the long-term health implications are significant.

The CDC, the Mayo Clinic and others have done research that indicates that victims of sexual violence and sexual abuse as children have higher incidence of heart disease, of cancer, of diabetes, of a host of physical and emotional disorders throughout their lives. This is not just a legal and a law enforcement challenge. It's a public health crisis.

Cindy: Why don't these kids just run away?

Ernie: I think part of it is because, if you're a kid in this situation, to whom do you run? Where do you go? Even though these kids live in dreadful circumstances, these are circumstances they know. They have somewhere to go. They're fed. They have a roof over their heads.

Cindy: And perhaps they believe they're loved?

Ernie: And they believe they're loved. It is a manipulation. It's really an insidious kind of manipulation.

Cindy: We had someone -- the reason I asked you that question is we had someone actually ask that of one of our people that testified in front of our task force. I'd never even thought to ask that, because why would someone not run away? But I thought it was a very good question to ask, especially when you're dealing with children. It's so sad.

Ernie: Let me add, there are those who run away. There are those and there are resources now, including the Polaris hotline, where you can call for help, and the resources in this community. Catholic Charity's Dignity Program and there are other resources that are emerging, but there are not enough of them. There are not enough places for these kids to get help, even when they're rescued.

Cindy: You mentioned some of the effects that it has on the victim, being trafficked day-in and day-out. But what kind of an effect does it have on the community as a whole?

Ernie: I think it's a cancer on the community. I think it absolutely damages the fabric of the community. The great challenge is that people don't, most good people don't know it's there.

I think one of the most amazing things that you're doing and this community is doing is simply raising the visibility and awareness of the problem. One of the challenges is, if
you don't recognize it, if you don't identify the victims, you're probably not going to help them because you don't know what's going on.

**Cindy:** We'll admit that you have a problem too, that this community has a problem...

**Ernie:** Absolutely.

Cindy: ...was our biggest fundamental issue that we began with.

**Ernie:** Many people, even when they learn about it, they assume this is victimless crime. That it's about sex. It's not about sex.

**Cindy:** Or these kids want it.

**Ernie:** Exactly. It's really, it's an educational process and it's why your 101 approach is so important.

Cindy: We know supply and demand has something to do with this, and I know we had chatted backstage and this is a little ahead of the ballgame on this. We as a task force here -- and we do have an ongoing task force now that was appointed by the Governor -- but we have not addressed supply and demand yet. We're addressing the supply but we're not, we have not talked about the demand at all. I'd like to talk about demand a little bit.

I grew up in Arizona. I grew up right here, and I remember the days that we used to publish the pictures of the guys that were caught soliciting in the newspapers. I don't see anything wrong with that. Yet, if you talk about it now, which I did raise with the "Arizona Republic" here, it's like, "Well, these guys could get hurt. Their wives might get after them." Well, I'm like, "Yeah? OK. I don't have a problem with that."

**Ernie:** That's a good thing.

[laughter]

Cindy: What is your take on that and what do you think we should be doing with demand?

**Ernie:** I think, no matter what we do, no matter how much awareness we build, we're never going to have impact on this problem until we attack the demand. This exists, traffickers traffic because it's profitable. In my judgment, the only way to impact this problem is to prosecute the customers.

I helped create an initiative with the FBI 11 years ago called the Innocence Lost National Initiative that addressed this problem from the federal level for the first time. Multi-jurisdictional task forces, federal, state and local. Been more than 1,500 convictions of traffickers, eight life sentences, multiple sentences of 20 years and up.

The most disturbing thing to me is that, as I watch these guys go away, I also watch somebody else spring up in their place. The reason is we haven't addressed the core enterprise. In my judgment, until we begin prosecuting the customers, we're not going to
have impact on this.

Now, it's tough because the customers do not match society's stereotype. They are doctors and lawyers and business executives and schoolteachers and police officers. It is difficult for prosecutors and judges to treat their violations, their crimes very seriously because they don't look like criminals.

The reaction you received from the Arizona Republic -- "Well, their wives might do something to them." Well, good.

Cindy: I bet they would!

[laughter]

Ernie: Exactly. In my judgment, if you look at particularly where the victim is a juvenile, where the victim is a child, at a minimum this is statutory rape.

I think there are significant charges that can be made and, in my judgment, if we begin prosecuting some customers and if customers begin paying a price, for the first time we're going to create real deterrence. The potential customers are going to engage in a risk-reward thought process and are going to think twice before they do it.

Now, we're never going to deter the most committed, most hardcore, but I think for those who are really the preponderance of the customer base, until we attack the demand, we're not going to have impact on this problem.

Cindy: How can we do that? We talked backstage a little bit about john schools and your opinion of that, which I think is a really good opinion. I'd like them to hear what you think that...Because many states do have a john school and they pay to go and then the money goes to the victim services. But what is your take on that?

Ernie: I'm not a big fan of john schools. I know there's some research that shows that they are beneficial for certain of these offenders, that it does have a positive. My greatest concern is that the john school trivializes and minimizes the offense. That it equates it to rolling through a stop sign, and that it treats an act which I believe at its core is a criminal act with a real victim, it treats it far more minimally than it deserves.

I think the message here is it's going to be hard and it's going to take community leadership. But I think the message is, if ever we're going to stop this problem, which is a cancer on this community and many communities, we've got to begin to train our attention, focus on the customers and basically ruin some lives. Make people think twice before they do this.

Cindy: I had someone say to me when I was talking very similarly, those are some of the things I was expressing. This person said to me, "Well, who are you? The morality police?" Which I said, "No, I'm not the morality police but I think you ought to be. Because I think it's time that this community take back the community and take back the safety for our children."
This is a tough one. I know that there's some great organizations here in Arizona that are facing this, men-to-men kind of thing, which I think is perfectly, is wonderful in fact in all of this. But you're right. This is going to be a hard one for this community, for any community. But this is going to be a hard one in this community.

**Ernie**: I don't think we need to debate this from a perspective of morality. This is not about morality. It's about criminality. There are real victims. The victims are paying real prices. It is affecting their lives. The fatality rate -- I just read today that the likelihood of premature death among this population is 50 times as high as the mortality rate of the broader population.

There's real harm that is being done to these victims. It is not voluntary. One of the challenges we face as we work with law enforcement is, at some point, a lot of police will say, by the time they identify this kid and intervene, well, she's 18 years old. She's an adult.

Well, we may be able to establish that she's been advertised on a sexual website since she was 12, and the sheer accident of her birth doesn't suddenly make it magically voluntary and consensual. It doesn't matter to me whether these victims are 18 or 19 or 14 or 15. I think we need to address, and I'm very pleased that this year in the Arizona legislature, Arizona became the latest state to adopt a version of the safe harbor law.

Our message is the kid's the victim. What was done historically in addressing this issue, if law enforcement would address it, is they'd arrest the kid as a prostitute. Well, the kid's the victim.

**Cindy**: The kid's also not a prostitute. I'm just making that point for them. I know you know that.

**Ernie**: I think we have to change the way society thinks about the problem. We have to bring new legislative tools, new resources, as we did these operation cross-country initiatives with the FBI for years. For many years, I was one of the FBI's spokesmen on those efforts. I've been preaching for a decade that, "The kid's the victim. You don't arrest the kid. You get the kid help."

Well, I've had several calls from district attorneys in major cities who have said to me, "I've heard the message. I know what you want me to do. But my domestic violence shelter won't take her. My runaway shelter won't take her. I don't have anywhere else to put her, except secure detention or jail." My response to that is, "That's just not acceptable."

One of the things we need to do as a part of this effort is, for the first time, to begin to provide real resources and real services to help these kids when they're rescued. There are an awful lot of places where they don't get help, and a whole bunch of them go right back to where they were being abused.

**Cindy**: That's really the kind of quandary that we're in in Arizona right now. We do not have the victim services available. It's very limited here. We do use, at this point, arrest as a safety mechanism for these kids, but I am in complete agreement with you that this is
the wrong way to go about it. We've got to get these kids into a healthy environment that can help save them, as you put it. Simply put, save them.

Before we move on to the trafficker, I would like one more thing. Does it mean you're a bad parent if your child is trafficked, if something happens to your child?

Ernie: I don't think so.

Cindy: I don't think so either.

Ernie: Obviously, our hope, our wish is that parents would be more attentive, would recognize the signals and the indications. I think the common thread here of the kids who are most vulnerable for trafficking is that these are kids in crisis. They have problems in their lives. They have problems at home. They have problems at school. For whatever the reason, the traffickers hone in on vulnerable kids.

Kids in families which empower them, which give them the right to say no, that teach them early on that they have power. I think one of the other issues is our society's sexualization of kids at younger and younger ages. A controversial concept that I try not to use, but many in the field use the term compliant victim. One of the things we see are these victims who almost expect to be exploited. We've got to change that.

We've had great impact in this society in addressing the social norms that make abuses possible and areas like domestic violence, like drunk driving, like car seats and all of these things. I think we need to do that same sort of approach on this one. To alert society, to change the way we communicate with kids.

Our hope is that parents will be more alert, more aware, more in-tune, but I don't have any delusions that parents, all kinds of parents are not going to have challenges with their preteen and teenage kids. What you have to do is keep those lines of communications open and be sensitive to what these kids are going through and try to get them help.

Cindy: I completely agree with that. Just for the record, I was a helicopter mom. I hovered. I was never far from them. They'd go to the mall. They didn't know I was there, but I was right behind them. [laughs] Anyway, that's too much information, I'm sure.

[laughter]

Cindy: Let's move onto the trafficker. Who is a trafficker? Who are these people?

Ernie: They're entrepreneurs. They're all kinds of people. They represent...

Cindy: Smart, aren't they? Smart.

Ernie: They are smart. They represent all segments of society. Obviously, the trafficker ranges. We're seeing a proliferation now of gang-based trafficking. This can be a part of the whole gang phenomenon. We see white traffickers and black traffickers. We see male traffickers and female traffickers. We see young traffickers and old traffickers.

Again, the message here that I want to deliver is this is about economics. They are in this
business because it's easy and it's profitable, and they weigh risk versus reward.

Historically, the risks have been really minimal. Therefore, they're willing to put themselves at risk of, today, because of the fact that there are 60-some task forces around the country, that the FBI for the first time in American history is focusing on this, that other agencies, there's more attention to this problem today than there's ever been.

The risks are greater. But there's still a lot of people who are making the judgment that the risks are still not high enough that they will engage in some other kind of activity.

Cindy: When we approached this in Arizona, when the task force handed over our recommendations, part of that was passing down an extremely tough law that really made it hard for these guys. If they were going to traffic in Arizona and if they get caught, they're going to jail for a long time and they're going to lose their assets.

I hear that that's not the case in every state. I'm hoping that people will not just follow our model on this but I think it's important that we make sure that these guys know they lose it all. Not only do they lose their freedom, but they lose it all. In some cases, I don't think that's quite an understanding of the community, or a need or a want of the community, I guess is a better way to put it.

Ernie: I agree with that. But one of the other challenges is that, even where there's good law, these cases are hard to make. What law enforcement has to do is establish that nexus between the behavior of the person under the control of the trafficker and the trafficker.

It helps if you have the cooperation of the kid being trafficked, and we know that, in a lot of these cases, the victim is very reluctant to be a witness, not terribly cooperative. The cases are hard to make.

The other thing that I think is a model that people should be aware of is these cases typically cross jurisdictional lines. Multi-jurisdictional approaches, I'm a strong believer in the task force approach. Single agencies are not going to have the impact that federal, state and local.

We're trying to replicate this, working with Interpol now to try to replicate the Innocence Lost model internationally. We've trained police in 121 countries. We've done a lot of training in Latin America on human trafficking. But it may not help Costa Rican authorities if the transportation of the kid goes into another Central American country.

Multi-jurisdictional approaches, in which law enforcement and prosecutors work together as teams, maximize the potential. But severity of sentence and certainty of sentence, I think, is absolutely essential if we're going to make the trafficker think twice about engaging in these behaviors.

Cindy: I completely agree. We have called them cartels. We've called them...It is organized crime. It is absolutely organized crime and, when I mean organized, very organized. How deep do these cartels go? How wide is this tentacle? How far does this tentacle reach? Does it just go to our borders? Does it go a little bit beyond our borders?
How far does the money line reach?

**Ernie:** All of the organized crime is not the same. There are some, I mean I have argued for years that this is organized crime. What I've typically said when I make that point is not traditional organized crime, not mafia or La Cosa Nostra.

But organized nonetheless, in that there is communication between the traffickers. There is movement of the trafficking victims from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. As Phoenix prepares for the Super Bowl, a lot of the potential kids that you're going to be on the lookout for are not going to be Phoenix or Arizona kids. They're going to be coming in from other jurisdictions, other countries, other states.

Now, as I've gone around preaching it's not mafia or La Cosa Nostra, the United States attorney for the Southern District of New York prosecuted, indicted members of the Gambino crime family for engaging in human trafficking via the Internet.

Now, why would serious organized crime become involved in something this seedy and insidious? Exactly. Easy, low-risk, enormously profitable. As a result, those tentacles reach beyond the United States.

There are multinational cartels. There is multinational organized crime reaching into Mexico and Central America. There's strong organized crime involvement from Russia and Eastern Europe. There is strong organized crime involvement in South Asia and Southeast Asia. There is strong organized crime involvement in the United States.

Most of it organized in that, there are communities, there are networks for the sharing of information and for the operation of these enterprises. If you need a lot of kids in another jurisdiction, traffickers in other jurisdictions will send them to you. To do that, there has to be communication.

**Cindy:** Some months back, I had the opportunity to meet with this man, and I'm not going to talk about the organization or him yet because this is still a research project underway. But what I came away with that, when I talked with him, was that this led all the way to the worst of the worst in this world. I'm talking the guys that are dropping bombs right now in the Middle East.

That's terrifying to me, that our children somehow could be affected with a communication ability and organized effort that is that deep and that deadly. His point was that follow the money, and that's exactly where you find out where it goes.

**Ernie:** I think that's exactly right. I don't have data or knowledge that can connect US-based...

**Cindy:** He's beginning to connect the dots for us, I think, is what's a great...there's good things out there on the horizon from this.

**Ernie:** That needs to be done. These issues need to be addressed, just like any other criminal investigation. That is, you need to do the analytical work. You need to determine
who's involved. You need to follow the money.

The greatest impact that we've had on the issues of child sexual exploitation has been through bringing together companies voluntarily and trying to destroy the business model. For example, we did this with the whole issue of commercial child pornography.

Basically, the pornographers were not only disseminating content but were collecting payment via credit card. I called the chairman of a major credit card company and said, "How is this possible?"

He said, "We don't know what these transactions are for. If you can identify in a timely way where the account resides, who the merchant bank is, that's an illegal use of the payment system. We can stop the payments and shut down the accounts." That's what we've done. It had an enormous positive impact, from an estimated $20 billion-a-year enterprise to less than a million dollars a year, effectively zero.

But what we achieved was not ending it, we just moved it. It has now moved into the new unbanked, unregulated digital economy using anonymizing Internet tools. Today, the traffickers, the pornographers, the pedophiles are operating in the deep web using...

**Cindy:** Explain the deep web for us.

**Ernie:** The United States government, several years ago, developed a new tool called Tor. Tor was developed by the US Defense Department to enable political dissidents and journalists to use the Internet anonymously, and therefore avoid retaliation by repressive regimes. A high-minded, noble purpose.

Apparently, nobody considered that it might be used by somebody other than political dissidents and journalists. As a result, there has emerged what is being called "the deep web." The deep web is an anonymous Internet, in which the users are utilizing these anonymizing tools -- and Tor's not the only one. The best-known of the deep web sites is called Silk Road, which has been called the Amazon for drugs.

There are sites where you can purchase trafficked weapons. There are sites where you can hire assassins. There are a huge range of pedophile sites, the best-known of which is called Lolita City. Another one called Pedo Empire. Another one called Jailbait.

All of these activities are basically anonymous, absent a mistake by the user so that law enforcement can track. Typically, that means connecting from a Tor IP to a non-Tor IP, or what law enforcement is trying to do is infiltrate.

It's an enormous challenge. My primary concern, and I met with law enforcement leaders around the world, is that until we develop better investigative technologies, we're catching the really dumb ones. We're not catching the sophisticated organized criminals who represent the greatest threat.

Let me say, from a commercial purpose, there are sites traffickers are using, the deep web, and collecting payment in virtual currencies.
**Cindy:** What is virtual currency?

**Ernie:** A virtual currency, the best-known of which is called Bitcoin. What it is is it's called a cryptocurrency. It's a peer-to-peer currency, in which you engage in payment that's not overseen, not regulated by any bank and not tied to any government currency program. It is a kind of Internet-based barter and Bitcoin's achieved value.

Let me say, I'm not anti-Bitcoin. I think there are a lot of positive uses for virtual currencies. For example, 2.5 billion adults on the planet today don't have access to banks or credit cards. If you're a guest worker in the Middle East and you want to send money home to Nepal and you're making a dollar a day, you're probably not going to be willing to pay a $10 transfer fee through a bank.

Through using virtual currencies, you can exchange value for virtually nothing. The problem is, like all technology innovations, is they have their intended uses and they have the other uses. My argument, which Cindy and I have talked about, is obviously everybody wants to maximize individual privacy, but there's a difference between privacy and anonymity.

I believe that total Internet anonymity is a prescription for disaster and that we need to come up with a solution. It's going to be a very difficult solution to arrive at because the technology's out there. There is almost a global arms race underway to create even more impenetrable technologies that nobody can get through.

**Cindy:** I know that you've done a great deal internationally and I've worked a bit overseas myself. What has frustrated me is to meet with some of the government heads, make the case against human trafficking and for all the reasons that we do and that we go, and these are the same guys that are building the sex hotels on the rivers and bringing the girls in and...

Sometimes, I feel like I'm beating my head against the wall on things like this. It's like, why bother? Because these guys are telling me one thing and doing something else. Exactly. I know you and I have talked a bit about this, but what do we do about governments besides just flat shame them somehow, internationally? And how, by the way?

**Ernie:** I think blame and shame is the most powerful...

**Cindy:** I like you.

**Ernie:** ...influencer. The fact that the US State Department does an annual report on trafficking of persons and, basically, points a finger. Now, a lot of them say, "Who gives the power and authority to the United States to judge the rest of the world? I think it would be good if that could be done on an international basis."

I think that's exactly right. There's a model. We've been promoting a model in this area that I doubt anybody's going to actually do, but in 1989 the G7 crated something called the FATF, called the Financial Action Task Force.
It's based in Paris. It was created in order to address the exploding problem of money laundering. It doesn't mandate anything, but it brings all these countries together. They do monitoring and analysis on individual countries. They issue reports. What they do is blame and shame. Suddenly, it's not the United States telling the rest of the world what to do. It's other countries in a collaborative process saying, "Here's the standard. Here's what you need to do."

I think it's a terrific model, and I've been trying to promote it for these issues. Because, ultimately, you can't mandate a country that doesn't want to be mandated. But I think you can embarrass them.

Cindy: I agree. The crazy blonde lady shows up in some strange places occasionally on this.

[laughter]

Cindy: I know we're going to ask questions in a second, but I have one more big issue that I want to talk to you about. That is backpage.com and other organizations like that. Can you, first of all, explain what "Backpage" is and why we're so adamant about stopping this?

Ernie: Backpage is an Arizona-based...

Cindy: I'm so proud.

[laughter]

Ernie: ...Internet classified advertising site. One of the components, they are basically the successor to, in terms of sex ads, to Craigslist. We and others worked with the state AGs on Craigslist. The problem is the problem of human trafficking has migrated. It's moved from the streets to the Internet. What happens today is that individuals can shop for a child for sex from the privacy of their own home or hotel room. It once again reduces the level of risk.

Backpage is the Internet advertising vehicle of what was formerly "Village Voice Media." Your Arizona company, New Times, acquired "Village Voice" and changed their name to Village Voice Media. They spun off the newspapers, but kept Backpage.

The challenge is...

Cindy: Big money.

Ernie: Big money, and it's because there's a huge market for sex ads. A lot of those sex ads are being used to sell human beings for sex, many of them kids.

I met with the owners of Backpage a couple years ago. They have taken some steps. They've eliminated nudity in the ads. They've eliminated links to the so-called "john boards," where you can get detailed reviews of the services of the person being advertised. They're screening, monitoring and reporting.
The problem is these are very difficult cases to make. Reporting doesn't end the issue. They are protected by federal law, by a 1996 statute called the Communications Decency Act. The intent is to protect Internet companies from liability based on what people post or publish or do on their sites.

In my judgment, the intent of the CDA was to protect the companies that are the backbone of the Internet. Google, Microsoft, AOL, Yahoo. The CDA provides civil immunity for these Internet sites. The basic premise is, unless you can show that a company materially contributes to the content of the ad, they're not responsible for what the advertiser does.

However, there's another aspect of this. That is it is a violation of federal criminal law to facilitate a criminal enterprise. The effect of these sites, not just Backpage but other sites, smaller sites, is essentially they've become the information infrastructure for the prostitution business in this country, much of which involves kids.

There is a need for a solution. There is a need for a solution other than monitoring, screening and reporting. I think the challenge is Congress doesn't want to touch the Communications Decency Act.

I worked last year with 47 state attorneys general, including Attorney General Horn here in Arizona, on a letter to do a narrow, surgical amendment to the CDA to enable state prosecutors to investigate and prosecute uniquely state crimes.

For example, prostitution is a crime in the United States. It's a crime in all 50 states. It may not be enforced very often.

If there is a state that wants to make a statement on this and wants to go after the abuse of these Internet sites for purposes of prostitution, right now, states are precluded from doing it by the federal law. Because there is not only civil immunity for the sites, there's what's called federal preemption, which means that only the federal government can invest and prosecute them.

I think that there is a need to come to grips with this challenge. The reality is, this is not just a US issue. These sites are the primary providers of children for sex, for trafficking purposes around the world. I don't have a ready solution, but we need to find one.

Cindy: I completely agree. All right, I'd like to open it up for questions around here. I don't know if any of you have one. Let's start right here, please. She has a microphone. Let her come to you, so we can all hear what you have to say. Tell us your name first and where you're from.

Jessica Hocken: Hello. My name is Jessica Hocken. I'm representing All Walks Project from ASU. My question for you is sugar daddy websites, such as arrangementfinders.com are increasingly being marketed towards college students. How can we cut back the potential for sex trafficking that would arise from the situation?

Cindy: Ernie?
Ernie: There's a whole range of these sites. The challenge is the inconvenient first amendment, because they don't rise to the level that they are necessarily actionable under the law. The best response to that is simply awareness and investigation.

We've had the same issues with so-called modeling sites, which oftentimes use little kids. Many of them are blatant fronts that people use for another purpose. Anything that is done, in terms of investigation and prosecution, has to be consistent with the law and the Constitution.

I think what we can do is identify the abuses, build greater awareness that many of these sites are not what they appear to be, and try to educate and sensitize people that they're real problems.

Cindy: It sounds like what you're doing, too, is advocating.

Ernie: I think so.

Jessica: We were actually...

Woman 1: Tell us about your organization.

Jessica: All Walks Project is, basically, what we're trying to do is we're trying to raise awareness through our on-campus chapter, All Walks at ASU. In addition, we're also wanting to go into domestic violence shelters that may not necessarily have sex trafficking training or maybe just want more of a student connection.

Going in towards mentoring and teaching basic life skills. Right now, we are working on a financial literacy curriculum. That is what All Walks Project is doing.

The reason why I bring up the online is because I know...We were actually having dinner a few months ago. Some friends of ours were talking about how other friends of theirs have been on ArrangementFinder and have been successful on it.

Coming from a college student perspective, where we have been researching and learning, especially with the McCain Institute and all that you're doing about research regarding those sites. It was shocking just knowing that that was happening and that friends of our were OK with that.

Cindy: Thank you for doing that. Thank you for being a part of that and working on something as important as that. Thank you. Questions over here. I'll go side to side of the room. Yes, in the back. Please. She's coming your way. I'm sorry. I'll point better next time. I'm sorry. [laughs] You're OK.

Akia Garland: My name is Akia Garland. I'm a Barrett student from the Polytechnic campus. The question I would like to ask is do you think that certain types of media, such as drawn child porn, desensitizes people to how serious human trafficking is?

Ernie: Yes. I think media is powerful. Media influences attitudes. One of the things we've been very concerned about, and I've spoken about often, is media that glorifies trafficking from pimp costumes for Halloween to the glorification of that life and culture.
in the media. I think we need to have community dialogue.

I talked about sexualization of children at younger and younger ages. One of the things that we've done is that sometimes retailers will come up with product that they don't really think about. Occasionally, we have contacted some of these retailers and said, "Do you understand what the message is in the product you're selling?" When they think about it, sometimes they're willing to pull it off the shelves.

I think, as a society, as a culture we need to have a conversation and we need to recognize that, in media, in advertising, in a whole range of things, there's power. The reason that companies spend the kind of money they do on advertising is it influences what people think and how people behave.

I think media sensitization around these issues is real important.

Cindy: Thank you. A couple of weeks ago for me, I was in New York, in fact at the Clinton Global Initiative. I happened to be at a breakfast with a woman who was very high up at Google.

I broached the subject with her. I said, "You know, tell me why when I Google 'pimp' on your website, these pictures come up of these glorified men in white fur coats. They're in Cadillacs. It's a dream come true. If you look at that, you think that's the best thing ever, because look what he's got and all that. Why do you glorify pimps and things like that when you put the word into Google?"

She said, "Well, we can't really tell you what comes up. It's what everyone puts in. That's how it comes up." I said, "Yes, but you can tell me what I want to see because you have that pop up in your ads and things on there. Why does this have to happen?"

She didn't have an answer for me. Not that I can change the world but that's always bothered me, that somehow when you Google "pimp" that's what comes up. Something that looks amazing online.

Ernie: Incidentally, that's not the way most traffickers look.

[laughter]

Cindy: No, no! If they did we could find them.

[laughter]

Ernie: Exactly.

Cindy: Anybody over here would like...?

Lynette Grable: Good evening. My name is Lynette Grable. I'm with Our Native Daughters with Free International. Good evening, Cindy McCain. You know I'm a personal fan of your work. Mr. Allen, I do commend you for all the work that you have done in human trafficking.
My question that I want to direct to you is that, as we look at a global perspective of human trafficking and sex trafficking, we see that indigenous women around the world, women and children are the targets. To bring that back down to on a US level, why is there so little work in the indigenous women and Native American culture and environments, or I would say and in community?

Both inner-city and on Indian reservations, there is very little work on reaching those victims of native women and children.

**Ernie:** First of all, I agree with you. My only answer is, historically, there's been very little work done on reaching any population, because there's so little recognition of the fact that there's a problem. I know that the US Justice Department has a significant Native American initiative and is trying to bring awareness and activity into Native American communities.

But you're exactly right. The vulnerability is enormous and you have even greater likelihood of hidden victims because nobody tells, nobody reports. There's not trust in institutions. The need is huge and I'm in complete agreement with you and it's not acceptable.

**Cindy:** I know I'm not telling you anything, but for those in the audience, there's an enormous problem up in the Dakotas, particularly in the oilfields, with regards to trafficked Native American women being, not only trafficked, but abused and all too often killed as a result of this.

I can also assure you that you have a great advocate in Senator Heidi Heitkamp on that because she is, she is driven to this issue in so many ways. She was a former AG of North Dakota and she's now of course the sitting US Senator, and her devout understanding of this and need to do something about it, she's really going to make a difference on this issue.

I can't commend her enough for doing what she's doing. I like to toot her horn whenever I can, because she does such great work. Yes.

**Christine Jones:** Do I have to stand up? I think you can see me. Hi, I'm Christine Jones. I'm called a lot of stuff. Former Republican candidate for governor, former executive at GoDaddy. Tonight, I'm putting all that aside and just appearing here. It's just I'm a huge fan of Cindy McCain and Ernie Allen. I wonder if you would talk...Ernie, you and I worked on this for a long time, my friend. We made a lot of good progress. There's still a long way to go, particularly with respect to the Internet.

I wonder if you'd just talk a little bit, both of you, about the two or three biggest things you'd love for people to know, particularly as we approach the Super Bowl and Arizona becomes a focus of attention on this issue.

If we could just say, "These are the couple of things that you've got to know and these are what we should go shout from the rooftops," for just the regular, everyday, average citizen to know to keep an eye out for, as we lead up to January. Can you talk a little bit
about what that would be?

Cindy: Why don't you start?

Ernie: Let me suggest one thing and that is, when people think about human trafficking, we've talked tonight about organized crime and cartels and all of this. The single biggest facilitator of human trafficking are legal, ordinary businesses who are simply unaware of the risks of what they're dealing with.

If you look at hotels, a hotel, and I'm very impressed with the Safe Action Initiative, here in Phoenix, to address that. If you look at transportation, airlines, bus lines, railroad, taxi services, car services. If you look at financial entities. One of the most important things we can do is sensitize the businesses who may in some way abut human trafficking, so that they take action.

I've been doing some work Delta Airlines. Delta Airlines has trained 50,000 of their personnel in the recognition of the indicators of human trafficking. I think things like that, and other companies are doing the same thing. This is not a problem of evil facilitators. This is a problem of good people simply not paying attention.

The second thing is the message to the public. I hear all the time, "This doesn't happen in my neighborhood." What we need people to do is simply pay attention, keep their eyes open. If they something, if they know something, if they suspect something, tell somebody. Report it. Act on it.

This is something, there's a lot of work that's being done in what's called bystander prevention. Bystander prevention simply means that don't walk by and act like you didn't see anything. It doesn't mean turn into action hero and put yourself at risk, but it means do something.

Alert somebody. There's the Polaris hotline, 888-373-7888, on human trafficking. If you suspect something, call that hotline, alert people. There are growing numbers of resources in this community and in many communities where you can really make a difference.

But I think that's what I would say is the principal action, is not just to focus on law enforcement and prosecution and the people who are going to have the most direct confrontation with traffickers and their victims, but engage the rest of the community who are really in a position to do something meaningful.

Cindy: You'll see as a buildup to the Super Bowl and what we're telling people too, as this comes around, is it's going to be a very clear, very consistent message coming out from those of us who are involved in this in a very deep way. The message is, number one, if you come here and traffic, you are going to go to jail, number one.

But number two, your point about awareness. I tell people this all the time. See something, say something -- the old TSA adage thing. But it's the truth. We're not asking people to become vigilantes, but we are asking you to be alert.

If it doesn't look right, there's a guy in the airport or in a restaurant and he's got four little
girls. Well, he could be a dad with the four kids on Saturday, or he could not be. If it
doesn't look right, there's no harm in just saying something to somebody. Because you
may save a life that way. I keep telling people don't, it's...The police want to hear from
you, or the airport people or wherever you may be. Don't be afraid to, because it really is
important to do so.

I think just the awareness of it and making sure that people understand that it is not only
going on during a Super Bowl, but it's going on all year long here. Phoenix is a great
place to come on vacation, so there's a lot of it. Yes, one more. Go ahead. In the back,
right there. Can you stand up? Thank you.

Olivia:  Hi. My name's Olivia and I'm a freshman at the Cronkite School of Journalism.

Cindy:  Wonderful.

Olivia:  You mentioned the "See something, say something." If you see a family in a
restaurant, how do you prevent that from becoming profiling? Oftentimes, when you do
say something, the people you tell don't take you seriously.

Cindy:  You want to start with that? That's a good question.

Ernie:  It's a great question. It's not profiling if there is a genuine belief that there's
something inappropriate. I ran the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
for 28 years. We would get calls through our hotline from somebody who was at a
shopping mall and saw an adult dragging a kid out of the shopping mall screaming.

Now, most of the parents in this room have, at one point or the other, dragged their kid
out of a shopping mall screaming. It is a fact of modern life. But you are not doing
anything other than raising the possibility that it may be an inappropriate action taking
place. It is what we do in a modern society to take care of each other.

I think it is far better to take action and alert somebody than to assume that there's an
innocent explanation. Because simply by taking that risk and alerting law enforcement or
alerting one of these hotlines about the possibility of harm, you may be saving a life. It's a
tradeoff that we have to make as a society.

My argument is don't assume the best, but think. Look at the situation and think about
what you see, and think about whether this was something, if it were you, would you
want somebody to act in some way?

Cindy:  I tell people, "Just trust your gut. If your gut tells you something's wrong, then
maybe there, it probably is something wrong." Now, I sound like a mother, but that's the
truth. It really is. I'm going to stop the questioning now. It's been a delightful evening and
I would like to leave you with this. Those of you who questioned or are concerned about,
should I get involved? Should I not get involved?

A number of years ago, I had the opportunity to work and to do some research in a few
things in India. I was in Calcutta. Now, mind you, this is, again, it's overseas. It's not local
but it profoundly affected me.

I was getting ready to leave the country. We have a daughter that's from Bangladesh and I was buying sari material for her, to bring home to her. I was in a very small shop and everything was cluttering around outside, and it's noisy and it's dusty and it's all the things that you expect to encounter when you're in Calcutta.

While I was talking to the owner and bartering and doing all this, I heard this clattering from underneath the floorboards of this building that I was in. I heard it and I asked him, I said, "Does your family live down there or something?" Which is very possible in a place like Calcutta. He said, "Oh yeah, that's my family. They're down below." "Well, OK, that's nice," kind of thing.

As I continued the transaction and completed the transaction I realized that I could see through the slats in the floorboards and they were kind of wide. It was a little wooden place that I was in. I looked down through the floorboards and I could see all these little eyes looking up at me. It dawned on me for the first time that something was wrong or two, it dawned on me that there were a bunch of little girls down there. That this was wrong.

Well, it was a bunch of trafficked girls. But here's the deal. I walked out and I didn't do anything. I didn't call my embassy. I didn't call the police. I didn't tell anybody. I walked out, got on my plane and flew home, and was back in my lovely home with my lovely children 24 hours later.

When you think about what you can and can't do, I could have helped those children and I'm ashamed that I didn't. But if you see something and you really think there could be something wrong or it doesn't look right or something's wrong or there's a woman with four little girls that don't look right on an airplane, whatever it may be. Just say something, because you really may be saving a life. You really may be saving a life.

I can't thank you enough for coming, for being here. For sharing your thoughts and your expertise and your experience with all of us. I hope we can call on you again to come and be a part of this with us, please.

Ernie: Absolutely.

Cindy: Thank you so much.

Ernie: Thank you.

Cindy: Thank all of you for coming tonight. Thank you.

[applause]