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***The Human Trafficking Legal Center Releases Report Analyzing Federal Human Trafficking Civil Litigation: 15 Years of the Private Right of Action***

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Human Trafficking Legal Center announces the release of a new report, “Federal Civil Human Trafficking Litigation: 15 Years of the Private Right of Action.”

In 2003, Congress amended the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, making it possible for trafficking victims to sue perpetrators in federal court for human trafficking. As of October 2018, the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passage of the 2003 law, trafficking survivors had brought a total of 299 cases under this federal private right of action. The cases ranged widely, alleging abuses in labor sectors ranging from domestic work to the fishing industry, from private prisons to agricultural work.

Alexandra F. Levy, senior staff attorney at the Human Trafficking Legal Center and author of the report, said, “No labor sector is immune from trafficking. But thanks to the civil provision of the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, no trafficker is immune from justice.”

The report’s most striking finding is the stark contrast between the federal criminal trafficking case docket and the federal civil trafficking case docket. The criminal trafficking docket and the civil trafficking docket are mirror images of one another. Based on data collected by the Human Trafficking Legal Center, 95% of trafficking indictments brought by federal prosecutors between 2009 and 2017 alleged sex trafficking. In contrast, in the same period, 91% of civil cases brought by trafficking survivors themselves alleged forced labor. For many survivors of labor trafficking, civil litigation has become the only pathway to justice.

Trafficking survivors, many with the help of pro bono counsel, are demanding their day in court. Since 2003, the number of cases filed per year has steadily increased, with six times as many cases filed in 2017 as in 2004.

Trafficking survivor plaintiffs are seeing results: total public settlements and judgments now exceed \$100 million (a number that does not include confidential settlement amounts). Plaintiffs from more than 60 countries have filed cases in 42 states – against individuals, corporations, municipalities, diplomats, labor recruiters, and private prison companies, among others. The

bottom line is that traffickers who would otherwise have enjoyed impunity are being called to account, deterring future traffickers and giving hope to survivors.

Martina E. Vandenberg, president of the Human Trafficking Legal Center, noted that civil litigation's impact cannot be measured in damages awards alone. "Human trafficking survivors – especially forced labor survivors whom the criminal system has failed – can now fight for justice. Over the next 15 years, we look forward to helping even more trafficking survivors reach the courthouse doors."

*The Human Trafficking Legal Center connects human trafficking survivors with highly-skilled pro bono attorneys nationwide. We hold traffickers accountable for their crimes through civil litigation and criminal restitution. The Human Trafficking Legal Center maintains databases of civil and criminal federal trafficking cases filed in the United States. The organization conducts in-depth research on human trafficking trends and victims' rights. For more information, please visit [www.htlegalcenter.org](http://www.htlegalcenter.org).*

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