



COUNTER-TRAFFICKING CONFERENCE



U.S. Chamber of Commerce

How the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and A21 Are Uniting Business and Government to End Human Trafficking

On November 19, 2025, the **U.S. Chamber of Commerce** and global anti-trafficking organization **A21** hosted the **Counter-Trafficking Freedom Summit**.

Speakers discussed the critical role that corporate leaders play in developing innovative approaches to combat human trafficking, including how technology is used to identify both perpetrators and victims.

Christine Caine, co-founder of A21, opened the day with a passionate call to partner together in Abolishing Slavery Everywhere, Forever.

Reach, Recover, and Restore is A21's comprehensive operational framework for combating human trafficking, which transitions from preventing exploitation through education and awareness (Reach) to assisting law enforcement in rescuing victims (Recover) and finally to providing survivors with long-term holistic care and legal support (Restore). Caine used this model to challenge business leaders and legislators to identify exactly where their specific resources and influence could best support this full cycle of freedom.



Left to right: Nick Caine, chief executive officer at A21, and Christine Caine, co-founder of A21, host a meet and greet with Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS) and Kevin Malone, senior adviser on human trafficking at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. These parties advocate for increased federal funding to prevent trafficking.

Sen. Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) framed the opening panel discussion by highlighting the need for the SAVE Girls Act, federal legislation that would provide states, local governments, and nonprofits with tools to put an end to trafficking young women and girls.

Blackburn's keynote set the stage for a panel featuring **Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith** (R-MS); **Lynn Fitch**, Mississippi attorney general; and **Dan Friel**, special agent in charge, East Criminal Investigation Unit of the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation. **Denise Gitsham**, founder of Vitamin D Public Relations, moderated the panel.

The panelists spoke about the necessity of cross-jurisdictional cooperation. The audience heard how Friel's investigations on



the ground inform AG Fitch’s state-level prosecutions, which in turn inspire the federal legislation championed by **Sens. Hyde-Smith and Blackburn**.

In the session “Technology for Good: Addressing Online Risks,” moderated by **Christian Elliott**, chief impact officer at A21, the panelists said that technology companies are attempting to gain a deeper understanding of the tactics that traffickers use to groom vulnerable individuals.



Rep. Rich McCormick (R-GA) speaks about the critical role of public-private partnerships in combating human trafficking.

Steve Grocki, chief of the Child Exploitation Unit Section at the U.S. Department of Justice, and Jeff Yesenky, special agent at the FBI, discussed how their agencies work together to track the digital footprints of extraterritorial offenders.

Melissa Snow, executive director of the Analytical Services Division of Child Sex Trafficking programs at the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), highlighted how the organization plays an important role in stopping child sexual exploitation by acting as the nation’s centralized clearinghouse for the CyberTipline.

Ashlee Lucas, anti-trafficking specialist at the Tebow Group, said, “I think it’s important that we have national and state guidelines on how to report if an individual is being abused. We need to collaborate and create an awareness campaign so that law enforcement and the public are aware of exploitation laws.”

Rep. Rich McCormick (R-GA) gave a keynote emphasizing the critical need for legislation that equips law enforcement with advanced tools to track traffickers. He reiterated the need for professional training to identify those being trafficked.

Kevin Malone, senior adviser on human trafficking at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, spoke about the Look Beneath the Surface campaign, which trains health care providers to spot victims in emergency rooms and clinics. He implored the audience not to forget about identifying male victims, which is often overlooked.

An A21 Advocate performed a spoken word address titled “Will You Remember Us?”

*You see the numbers, the millions, the stats on a screen,
But do you see the face behind the machine?
When the conference ends and the lights go down,
And you fly back home to your safe little town,
Will you remember the girl in the window, the boy in the street?
Or are we just an agenda item, a quarterly meet?*

*We are not just a cause for your corporate day,
We are the price that the vulnerable pay.
So I ask you now, with the power you hold,
To be more than just talk, to be brave, to be bold.
Don’t just clap for the poem and nod at the fuss,
When the silence returns ... will you remember us?*



Charlie Blythe, mobilization director at A21, highlights the importance of supply chain transparency for businesses.

Charlie Blythe, mobilization director at A21, said that firms are vulnerable to exploitation as it can occur in supply chains, outsourcing, recruitment agencies, and seemingly legitimate adverts that turn out not to be. That's why businesses cannot afford to remain neutral. According to Blythe, "The question is not, does trafficking touch my industry? The question is, where does it touch my industry—and what am I doing about it?"

Markee Johnson, head of U.S. advancement at A21, led a conversation with **Elizabeth Fay**, senior director of policy advocacy at Verité, and **Kelly Metcalf**, manager of human rights at BSR, that tackled the technicalities of supply chains. They argued that a slavery-free business culture isn't just a moral imperative; it's a business necessity. Companies must audit their labor sources to ensure that their products aren't tainted by forced labor.

Michael Billet, senior director of policy research in the Employment Policy Division at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, led the session "How Trade Associations Are Driving Industry-Wide Action Against Human Trafficking."

Representatives from the American Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA) Foundation, the National Beer Wholesalers Association (NBWA), and the American Gaming Association (AGA) presented how the business community is at the forefront of raising awareness and empowering human trafficking survivors. While most trafficking victims are never identified, there is an urgent need for widespread training, especially for businesses that are on the frontlines.

Eliza McCoy, vice president of programs and impact at the AHLA Foundation, discussed training hospitality staff to spot the signs of trafficking in hotels.

Erin Donar, vice president of communications and public affairs at the NBWA, pointed out that beer distributors visit nearly every retailer and bar in the country, making them invaluable eyes and ears on the ground.

Alex Costello, vice president of government relations at the AGA, explained how anti-money laundering protocols in casinos are being used to flag traffickers' financial movements.



Barbara Langley, senior director for innovation and strategic engagement at the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), speaks about the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration in providing life skills training for those at risk of being trafficked.

Barbara Langley, senior director for innovation and strategic engagement at the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), spoke about the need for a rule of law.

Langley said, “Human trafficking thrives on corruption, and businesses should treat anti-trafficking measures as a core compliance and risk management issue.” She emphasized that transparent, ethical business systems and economic empowerment, particularly for women, are essential tools for dismantling the shadow economies where exploitation occurs.

The event concluded with remarks from **Michael Billet** and **Nick Caine**, chief executive officer at A21, who reinforced the summit’s central theme: Awareness is no longer enough; the fight against trafficking requires concrete, operational action from the private sector.

Billet and Caine then led the audience into the Joint Awards Ceremony.



JOINT AWARDS CEREMONY

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and A21 recognized four companies across two categories for their leadership, achievements, and the measurable impact they are making in the fight against modern-day slavery.

CATEGORY ONE: PREVENTION & AWARENESS

Counter Forced Labor Technologies

Counter Forced Labor Technologies (CFL) received the Prevention & Awareness Award for its innovative use of artificial intelligence to help companies identify, assess, and mitigate forced labor risks throughout global supply chains. CFL’s Global Risk Assessment Technology™ (GRAT) combines predictive analytics, regulatory intelligence, and real-time risk mapping to provide organizations with actionable insights before risks escalate.

A multinational electronics manufacturer used GRAT to uncover forced labor indicators within a Tier 2 supplier in Southeast Asia, enabling corrective actions, stronger supplier oversight, and revised sourcing agreements based on human rights criteria.

In-N-Out Burger

In-N-Out Burger was recognized for its extraordinary commitment to human trafficking awareness year round through the ongoing work of its Slave 2 Nothing Foundation. During the company’s annual campaign, held each January to recognize Human Trafficking Prevention Month, restaurant employees across all locations wear pins, distribute informational materials to customers, display signage in drive-thru lanes, and match donations at registers to support the organizations working with survivors of human trafficking. In addition to In-N-Out Burger’s annual campaign, the company continuously displays its commitment to awareness and prevention through employee training and reporting materials posted in all restroom stalls.



Katie Wadman, Miss District of Columbia 2025, presents the Survivor Empowerment Award to Abbe Horswill, director of human rights at Marriott International, Inc. Marriott International partners with the University of Maryland's SAFE Center for Human Trafficking Victims to provide employment opportunities for sex trafficking victims.

CATEGORY TWO: SURVIVOR EMPOWERMENT

Marriott International, Inc.

Since 2019, Marriott International has supported the University of Maryland's Support, Advocacy, Freedom, and Empowerment (SAFE) Center's Economic Empowerment program. In collaboration with the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery, Marriott International piloted a hospitality training program with the SAFE Center, which has since trained 40 clients.

The partnership has expanded to offer hospitality training for survivors nationwide, with support from the American Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA) Foundation. Marriott International also donates clothing and essential items to survivors in the program.

Sanctuary Project

Holly Christine Hayes, as a survivor leader, founded the Sanctuary Project to create spaces where trafficking survivors can heal and receive employment opportunities. The model offers paid job training in jewelry production, packaging, fulfillment, and quality control.

Participants also receive mentoring, engage in trauma-informed coaching, and are paired with peer-support recovery coaches who meet with them regularly to set goals and address challenges.

The program has served 47 survivors with a 92% long-term success rate. Sanctuary Project's social enterprise jewelry line, Sanctuaire, sells its products through Sanctuaire shop and target.com and opened its first flagship store in the Nashville, Tennessee, area in 2025.

These four organizations demonstrate that businesses across all sectors can play a vital role in combating human trafficking. Their innovative approaches to prevention, awareness, and survivor empowerment serve as models for corporate responsibility and meaningful impact in the fight against modern-day slavery.



At right: Michelle Little, vice president of community affairs & corporate giving at Waste Management Solutions, presents the Survivor Empowerment Award to Holly Christine Hayes, founder of the Sanctuary Project, for her achievements in helping sex trafficking victims get back on their feet.