



ILLINOIS STATE POLICE

NEWS RELEASE

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ILLINOIS STATE POLICE ESTABLISHES ILLINOIS TRAFFICKING ENFORCEMENT GROUP FOCUSED ON COMBATTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING STATEWIDE

*New Investigative Support Operations Center Provides Latest Technology and
Advancements to Combat Crime*

DECATUR – The Illinois State Police (ISP), partnering with the Decatur Police Department, the McLean County Sheriff's Office, and the Howard G. Buffett Foundation, has created the Illinois Trafficking Enforcement Group (ITEG) to take its work in combating human trafficking to the next level. Similar to the nine ISP Metropolitan Enforcement Groups and 13 Multi-Jurisdictional Drug Task Forces created to combat drug trafficking, ITEG will consist of local and state partners focused on fighting human trafficking, while also working with community groups and health organizations to provide trauma-informed support services to individuals who have been trafficked.

"Human trafficking occurs not just globally, but locally, and it is critical law enforcement at all levels work together," said ISP Director Brendan F. Kelly. "The Illinois Trafficking Enforcement Group enables state and local law enforcement to literally work side by side, while coordinating with our federal partners, to stop this deplorable crime. By collaborating with the Howard G. Buffett Foundation, the Illinois Trafficking Enforcement Group will have access to cutting edge technology and the latest advancements in law enforcement resources to stop those benefiting from forced labor or sexual exploitation, and help those who have been trafficked."

ITEG will be headquartered at the new Investigative Support Operations Center (ISOC) in Decatur, providing special agents and inspectors with cutting edge technology and the latest software to identify and apprehend criminals. ISOC will also house the ISP Investigative Support Command, which tackles human and narcotics trafficking, and cold case death investigations, as well as providing technical support for surveillance and counter surveillance operations. The Howard G. Buffett Foundation is instrumental in advancing the work of law enforcement by ensuring special agents have the latest technology and software to protect public safety.

"Our investment in the Illinois Trafficking Enforcement Group and the Investigative Support Operations Center here in Decatur is part of our Foundation's broader strategic initiative to combat human trafficking in America," said Howard G. Buffett, Chairman and CEO of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation. "Many communities do not think human trafficking is happening where they live, but our work has shown that the more resources are dedicated to this issue, the more the crime is uncovered and disrupted. With today's investment, Illinois becomes the seventh state with a dedicated task force to combat human trafficking with funding support from the Howard G. Buffett Foundation."

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ISOC provides a centralized location where state, local, and federal partners can work to uncover leads and dismantle criminal organizations, hold perpetrators accountable, and provide trauma informed services to victims. ISOC is also a functional human trafficking training center where undercover agents and ITEG inspectors will enhance their skills and methods for both proactive demand suppression details and victim recovery operations.

“The Decatur Police Department is proud to join forces with the Illinois State Police and the McLean County Sheriff’s Office as part of the Illinois Trafficking Enforcement Group Task Force,” said Decatur Police Department Chief Brad Allen. “This partnership enhances the ability to identify, investigate, and prosecute those who exploit others, while providing support to victims and connecting them with needed resources. Human trafficking often hides in plain sight, but through this joint effort we will take a strong stance to protect the most vulnerable.”

“The McLean County Sheriff’s Office is honored to partner with the Illinois State Police, the Decatur Police Department, and the Howard G. Buffett Foundation as part of ITEG,” said McLean County Sheriff Matt Lane. “Together, we’re committed to launching an aggressive campaign combating human trafficking and protecting victims through coordinated enforcement efforts.”

In addition to enhancing law enforcement’s ability to conduct proactive human trafficking demand suppression details and rescue operations, ITEG will be able to investigate large scale human trafficking conspiracy cases and working to dismantle criminal organizations. Along with special agents and inspectors, Decatur Police Department forensic examiners will be part of ITEG.

ITEG evolved from the ISP Trafficking Enforcement Bureau created in January 2022 to provide a proactive approach to combatting human trafficking. ISP has been conducting details every month across the state, including demand suppression details where those participating in human trafficking are targeted, as well as recovery operations aimed at providing help and support services to those who have been trafficked. Since that time, more than 1,300 ISP officers have received human trafficking awareness training, and almost 140 officers have been trained in advanced investigative techniques related to human trafficking investigations. Last year, the ISP Trafficking Enforcement Bureau conducted seven human trafficking demand suppression operations resulting in 31 arrests and 90 criminal charges.

As the state of Illinois moves towards a standardized law enforcement response to human trafficking, ITEG will be an integral part in implementing consistent strategies and mentoring other law enforcement agencies to combat human trafficking and better serve those who have been trafficked.

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