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BONNIE ERBE: This week on *To the Contrary*, First, taking aim at human trafficking. Then, members of Congress live on a food stamp budget. Behind the headlines, how the nursing shortage can affect your life.

(Musical break.)

MS. ERBE: Hello. I'm Bonnie Erbe. Welcome to *To the Contrary*, a discussion of news and social trends from diverse perspectives. Up first, human trafficking.

(Begin video segment.)

MS. ERBE: It may be hard to believe, but slavery is still an issue in the 21st century, both here and abroad. And there's new pressure to get that message out.

Human trafficking globally is estimated to be a \$32 billion a year industry, exploiting some 27 million women, children, and men at any given time for sexual slavery and forced labor, that, according to an annual State Department report released this week.

Government officials say foreign and domestic policies can help end this heinous practice. The State Department also downgraded China and Russia to the lowest rankings in this report due to their ineffective anti-trafficking efforts. That ranking could lead to sanctions.

Here, at home, federal agents broke up a forced labor trafficking ring in New York and Virginia this week. And the Department of Homeland Security recently re-launched its Blue Campaign, which combats trafficking.

SECRETARY OF HOMELAND SECURITY JANET NAPOLITANO: We have increased arrests, prosecutions, working with – we work a lot with the victims, actually, by manifold. So that's an important part of what we do. Education is an important part of what we do, and then, working with others to be on the alert for the signs of human trafficking.

MS. ERBE: Napolitano says efforts to fight trafficking take place at home and abroad.

SEC. NAPOLITANO: It's international. It's domestic. There's no community that's immune from human trafficking.

(End video segment.)

MS. ERBE: We will have more of that interview with Secretary Napolitano and other champions against human trafficking in a few weeks.

So, Sam Bennett, what can the U.S. do to stop trafficking at home and abroad?

SIOBHAN BENNETT: Well, it's modern day slavery. And look what it took for our nation to end African-American slavery. We have to be just as determined, just as comprehensive and tackle this on every single level that we possibly can.

TARA SETMAYER: Well, I hope we don't have to fight a war over it, but this is definitely something that I think is the underbelly of the crime world. It's despicable. It affects women disproportionately. And this is something that the United States definitely needs to take more of a leadership role on because there are a lot of other countries, like China, Russia, Thailand, Southeast Asia that are the biggest violators.

AVID JONES-DEWEEVER: Unfortunately, there are no easy answers, but what we can do at least is to make sure that we raise awareness around the problem, around the pervasiveness of the problem, both internationally and domestically, and prosecute to the fullest extent of the law those criminal enterprises that are engaged in it.

GENEVIEVE WOOD: Yeah. I don't think there's no doubt the U.S. has to take a role here, but I think – you know, there's no one solution or strategy to fix this. And this is truly an area that would benefit from a public-private partnership. I mean, we need the government to go in and do enforcement (practice ?) so we don't need to be doing that ourselves, but once these people come out, you need the faith-based communities, local communities to come around them and welcome them back into society.

MS. ERBE: And not just welcome them but reintegrate them, train them –

MS. WOOD: And help them. That's right.

MS. ERBE: Give them other skills, educate them so they can – they have another trade.

MS. SETMAYER: I've spent some time in Thailand with my job – not some time, but I was there in Thailand for 10 days. And we visited some of those programs, because this is a major problem in Southeast Asia.

And we were sitting at a café. And across the street, you could see all these men with these young girls – they couldn't have been more than 12 or 13 years old, but basically preying on them for sexual favors.

And Thailand has really worked hard on reintegration programs, its refugee programs for ages eight years old to 18. That's how – you know, teaching them these skills, you know, how to – basket weaving, whatever, but things that they need to do to

reintegrate them because it's such a large problem, they have to have these refugee camps for children as young as eight years old that are involved with this.

MS. ERBE: But I want to know – you know, what is going on? Why is it that, you know, 20 some odd years ago, there wasn't – didn't seem to be much of this, and now, it's all over the place. You know, there's a lot of it. And most Americans are unaware of it.

MS. BENNETT: Right. Well, first of all, it's grown because it's profitable.

MS. ERBE: But it's also grown – I mean, let me answer my own question a little bit. It's grown because of increased international transportation first of all, and it's grown because of the Internet. Domestically, that's how a lot of these pimps and wackos are recruiting young girls.

MS. WOOD: Other legitimate businesses that use it, well – or now – these folks are not – they're taking advantage of those very –

MS. BENNETT: Well, and I've shared in the show more than once I think that, you know, I was put in white slavery when I was a young girl. And what happened was I ran away from home to escape sexual abuse, got on a bus, went to New York City, where all little white runaway girls go to, and they're waiting right at Port Authority. Now, I'm 55 so that was what? Thirty-five years ago, you know, even more than that, 37 years ago.

So having been through that myself, I think one thing I would like – can speak to, I mean, the reason I escaped is because the slaver was stabbed. He was dying. And one of the women let me out. And then I spent the next 20 years of my life ignoring what had happened to me, which had this enormous impact on all dimensions of my life. And why was that?

Well, the thing underneath for women reentering – predominantly women – is shame. Our culture does not acknowledge how devastating – all research shows that this kind of abuse is the single most devastating abuse that any human being can go through. So it requires far more to heal. And I'm lucky. I healed. I had the therapeutic support.

MS. ERBE: How did you though? I mean, seriously, and to rise to become the head of an important women's political group. I mean, you've got to be one of a kind, right?

MS. BENNETT: Well, I feel very fortunate. But what happened is I accidentally stumbled into a therapist's office because my marriage was failing. And the therapist asked to meet with each one of us separately to tell us our life stories so she could work with us. And I told her my life story like I'd never told anybody the story ever, my mother, nobody. I'd never told her. She went, oh, my goodness gracious. Me, oh, my. That was my first clue there was a problem.

So I think when, Avis, you talk about awareness and making this a mandate and something we focus on, that's absolutely critical because reentry issue, once a young woman is no longer marketable, is massive, and, as research shows, massively underreported.

MS. WOOD: And I think that's part of the trouble in this country. I mean, we have this going on in this country. I mean, you just spoke to it.

MS. SETMAYER: Look what happened in Ohio.

MS. WOOD: That's right. But it's still not –

MS. ERBE: And this week in New York and Virginia.

MS. WOOD: That's right.

MS. BENNETT: And it's not rare. It's not rare. It's far more common than you think.

MS. WOOD: It's near as rare as people think. But it's not what it is in Southeast Asia and these other places. And I think that the challenge is – we're actually the country that has the ability I think and the wherewithal to really try to do something about, and to be outraged by it, and be a world leader.

But yet, in our country, I just think a lot of people can't believe it. They just don't – it's a weird that happened, that weird story, you know, but this can't really be going on day to day.

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: But the perception of it is that it's something that happens somewhere else to those people over there, not that it could be in my back yard, not that it could potentially happen to my child, which it could. I mean, the pervasiveness of domestic sexual slavery in this country is enormous.

MS. ERBE: What do you mean domestic sexual slavery?

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: In terms of children in the United States, who are really transported from one area of the country to another area of the country.

MS. ERBE: Or down the block and in a basement.

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: Exactly.

MS. ERBE: Except that the Cleveland situation was – that was not for commercial exploitation.

MS. SETMAYER: No, that was personal.

MS. ERBE: I mean, that's actually –

MS. SETMAYER: But that case did raise awareness about something going on in Toledo, Ohio, which seems to be a large recruitment center for this kind of sexual slavery. But it's not the only kind of human trafficking. You also have like in China, where they traffic folks for organ harvesting, which is another big thing that goes on.

MS. ERBE: And, in China, they're also trafficking women to marry men because of the one-child rule, and everybody wanting sons, they're short on women.

MS. BENNETT: And then, if you also look at this as a business, there's a supply issue and there's a demand issue. And that's another very important way to look at it. So dealing with the Internet reality that we have but also dealing with demand. I mean, how punitive can we make it? Right? How punitive can we make it and how much can we raise awareness?

MS. ERBE: Well, and you mentioned supply and demand. One important thing that about four or five states have done now is when they bust – you know, when they find teen girls in – you know, as prostitutes, they know it's not voluntary. They know that they're not sex workers so to speak, that they're doing this because they need the money and they've made the decision. So they're not prosecuting them. They're putting them in treatment. And that's really helpful. They're busting the Johns and the pimps, but recognizing that the girls are slaves. And that's – how can we get other countries to do that? Any idea?

MS. BENNETT: Well, I think we have a really important role to play as a nation. Your point was beautiful about that, Genevieve. We have the resources; we have the wherewithal to really tackle this problem. I was delighted to see Janet Napolitano re-up the Blue Program, a great example of the good things that happen when you have a woman leader, at the head in the same way that Senator Gillibrand is leading this sort of military rape and assault issues that are going on now. I think America has a very important role to play here.

MS. SETMAYER: You have to sanction those countries because they don't have the same respect for human rights that we do in this country. And the only way to hit them is with the purse strings.

MS. WOOD: Because they do understand the financial side.

MS. ERBE: All right. Let us know what you think. Please follow me on Twitter @BonnieErbe and #tothecontrary. From fighting trafficking to dining on \$5 a day.

For one week, almost 30 members of the U.S. House took what's called the SNAP Challenge, eating on less than \$5 per day. That's the amount given to SNAP, or food stamp recipients.

In the last five years, the program has doubled in cost. A bill in the House that would have cut food stamps by \$2 billion per year was defeated this week. The Senate version of the agriculture bill cuts much less than the House version would.

But Representative Barbara Lee and others who took the challenge say the program needs more money, not less. The program's not designed as a family's only source of income for food. Benefits rise based on the size of the household. A family of four could receive just less than \$670 per month for food.

Your thoughts, Avis Jones-DeWeever.

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: You know, it's amazing to think that we're at a point in our history in which we have record levels of poverty, and, we, at the same time, are talking about cutting billions of dollars away from food stamps existence. It is really hard to really sort of understand really what's going in the mind of legislators who see that as the palpable reality.

Thinking that it takes – people are living on just \$4.50 a day, and you want to cut that back in terms of food stamp allowances, it's amazing to me. I really can't understand it.

MS. WOOD: Here's the other alternative reality. We have doubled what we're spending on food stamps in the last four years, from \$40 billion to \$80 billion. Today, one in seven Americans are on food stamps.

And the key here is it's supposed to be supplemental, not – it's not that people should be eating on \$5 necessarily per person per day. It's to supplement the family's budget. We've got more people on food stamps than ever, more people who years ago would not have qualified but we've lowered the standards by saying, you can still make more money and you can have more assets, but we've lowered the standards.

And now we're – the challenge is that people who truly need it may be getting forced out. But the fact is that we are spending more than we ever have. I don't think taking 2.5 percent back is a problem.

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: But there's a reason why we're spending more. Not only do we have record levels of poverty. We are also not really expanding other sources of the safety net that used to be in existence.

MS. ERBE: And record levels of obesity too. And if you live in – if you're unfortunate enough to live – have only \$4.50 a day per person to spend, you're not buying fresh fruit and vegetables. You're – you know, or organic anything. You're buying potato chips and macaroni and cheese.

MS. SETMAYER: But see, this is where I have a problem with this whole thing. You know, when I was a kid, my mother was a single parent. She was 21 years old when she had me and we were on food stamps for a short amount of time. I remember when they were actually food stamps. They were colorful. They looked like Monopoly money.

But you – you know, nowadays, it's all about, oh, it's shameful. We don't want people to, you know, feel embarrassed. No, they can't be drug tested. Oh, you know – it's become almost like it's an accepted, OK way of life that becomes possibly a permanent way of life. And there's no incentive to get off your behind, get a job, and get off public assistance. Now – wait a minute. Hold on.

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: Welfare rolls have dropped by half so to say that that hasn't been happening, what the reality is, they're in –

MS. SETMAYER: Yeah, that's true – and –

MS. WOOD: That's changing because –

(Cross talk.)

MS. ERBE: Wait a minute. Let her finish and then you.

MS. SETMAYER: Why are we lowering eligibility standards so that able-bodied people don't have to – and have 99 weeks of unemployment, then we lower the standards and we have able-bodied people who love the system, who don't – can't work do need them. No. We expand the program.

I'll give you an example. Ninety-one thousand dollars is the median income in Morris County, New Jersey. Their food stamps went up 260 percent in the last five years because they changed the eligibility. It's ridiculous where it is and we're only cutting a little bit to make it more efficient.

MS. ERBE: A quick question. One in seven now on food stamps, is that a record high?

(Cross talk.)

MS. WOOD: We've never had as many Americans on food stamps as we do today.

MS. ERBE: Talk about percentage of the population.

MS. WOOD: The percentage high – yes, high.

MS. ERBE: OK. All right. Your thoughts.

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: Once again, record levels of poverty. Our safety net has really plummeted in the last several years. Our welfare reciprocity has gone down by over half. There are more people who qualify for it that cannot get it now. In terms of using it as a supplement, you know, rent rates have sky rocketed in recent years. Wealth in the African-American community alone has dropped by over 50 percent in five years' time.

MS. SETMAYER: You can thank Barack Obama for that.

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: To sit here and say that there is not any – no. You can thank –

MS. ERBE: Wait, wait, wait.

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: You can thank the president that had two wars and didn't pay for them for that. Thank you.

MS. ERBE: Dr. DeWeever. Please let her finish. I let you finish. Go ahead.

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: And so that has created a situation where individuals need a safety net. You know, I don't want to live in a country where we don't want to make sure that those people who need help aren't getting it because we are so selfish that we are only concerned about the children in our households.

(Cross talk.)

MS. ERBE: Wait, wait, wait.

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: Most people who use assistance are children. Do you want to tell me that you want to – that you do not want to make sure that every child in this nation – I don't care if you want to make judgments about why they're here, who are their parents, and who's not their parents, they are here now. And they need to eat and they deserve to eat.

MS. SETMAYER: That's a specious argument. Come on. Specious argument. Nobody has ever said children are supposed to go hungry. Eight hundred billion dollars as month – a year.

MS. ERBE: All right. Sam. Sam.

MS. BENNETT: And I'll just have the last word on this one. I went to – my mom was single, was an alcohol and I raised my brother and my sister and took care of my mom. And if I hadn't had free lunch and if we hadn't had food stamps, we wouldn't have eaten.

MS. WOOD: Sam, we believe you –

MS. ERBE: Let her finish.

MS. BENNETT: Genevieve, let me finish.

MS. SETMAYER: Are we eliminating the program? No.

MS. BENNETT: So all I ask for – all I ask for – and I serve as a governor appointee on the Lehigh County Board of Assistance and watch the case loads, watch the number of people who come through. We have our quarterly meetings. I'm intimate with these figures. And I think Avis hit the nail on the head. We can't look at food stamps alone. We have to look at the comprehensive package that's now available in form of support network versus 10 years ago, versus 20 years ago.

MS. ERBE: All right. We're out of time on this topic, but, boy, it's a hot one.

Behind the headlines: nursing research. The U.S. is experiencing a nursing shortage eased a bit by the recession but projected to intensify as baby boomers age and health care needs grow.

There are many reasons for the shortage, including for more capacity to educate nurses. Another reason is female graduate nursing students don't win as much in grants as males do. We spoke to Dr. Jean McSweeney of the University of Arkansas about this troubling trend.

(Begin video segment.)

MS. ERBE: The federal government projects registered nursing needs to grow faster than any other occupation between now and the year 2020. The U.S. will need three-quarters of a million more nurses by then and another half million will retire. That means we'll need a total of 1.2 million more nurses in the next seven years. Nursing students are taught largely by graduate student nurses. Since there aren't enough graduate student nurses, it's creating a bottleneck.

JEAN MCSWEENEY [Associate Dean, Nursing Research University of Arkansas]: We need nurses at every level, but we are held back by the number of doctorally (sp) prepared nurses that we have, which precludes us from taking in large numbers of new students into nursing because we don't have enough people teaching nursing.

MS. ERBE: And why is that? One reason is research grants, the lifeblood of a graduate nursing student, are extraordinarily tight.

MS. MCSWEENEY: We have one of the smallest institutes budget wise at National Institute of Health. So we have a smaller pot of money to begin with. We have

more doctorally prepared nurses vying for that pot of money so you can begin to see some of the issues that we run into in that regard.

MS. ERBE: The government supplies the largest source of grant money. There are private sector grants, but they are minimal. More men are entering the nursing field but women still predominate. When it comes to landing research grants, however, men do better than women.

MS. MCSWEENEY: Women have a much lower percentage of getting those – that next level of grant funded than men do. And it could be that they aren't submitting as many; there could be a variety of things that are entering into that picture. But we do know that women are receiving those more advanced awards at a lower rate than men are.

MS. ERBE: Another issue has to do with their personal lives. Graduate nursing students are at the age where they want to start families. So lots of women leave before they complete their studies and come back later, when their children are a little older. That also makes it much tougher for them to land grants. Dr. McSweeney is trying to streamline the education process so fewer women will drop out.

MS. MCSWEENEY: We are starting programs that are like a post-baccalaureate that they can go straight through and come out with a doctoral degree, which takes at least a year or perhaps two years off of education so that people can get to these degrees much more quickly and be more productive.

MS. ERBE: You, the viewer, may be asking yourself, why should I care about whether graduate nurses are getting grants? The answer is this has a direct impact on your life and the lives of all the people around you.

MS. MCSWEENEY: Nursing research typically focuses on improving quality of life, helping people manage chronic conditions, such as diabetes, congestive heart failure, when we look at palliative care with people, end-of-life care. These are all extremely important issues to nursing.

And if nurses do not get enough money to be able to study these issues and be able to really determine what are the best approaches, the most economical approaches, have the best outcomes for the patients, then everyone will begin to suffer because nursing research is extremely important in trying to deal with these very, very important issues that people face every day in their lives.

(End video segment.)

MS. ERBE: The solution, in your mind?

MS. WOOD: Well, I mean, it is an issue. I mean, as this population in this country in particular continues to age, nursing is going to play a huge role because a lot of this – it's not just that you need medical attention from a doctor. It's day-to-day

nursing needs. So, one, it would be a great profession to go into for people who are looking for a secure job.

MS. ERBE: Well, and that's why more men are going in quite frankly so salaries are – you know, the salaries are going up.

MS. WOOD: That's right. It is good, because there's a great demand for it.

MS. BENNETT: But let's be honest. It's only 6 percent. I mean, one of the problems here – I'm sorry, this is a perfect example –

MS. ERBE: But years ago, it was zero.

MS. BENNETT: I know, but still, let's just be honest, 6 percent. I mean, this is a classic example of how the occupations that women traditionally hold or have held – because remember, it used to be teaching and nursing was all you could do. So those occupations that have been largely women are precisely the ones that are undervalued, underpaid, under resourced, and now we're all suffering the consequences of it. This is sexism beginning and end, really.

MS. WOOD: Well, I don't know. I mean, I've had friends in nursing and they actually – it was quite lucrative. And schedule wise, it was great in terms of being able to – (inaudible) – schedule.

MS. BENNETT: Listen, both my sisters, Genevieve, are nurses, both my sisters and my aunt. The truth of the matter is though fewer – one of the reasons a shortage is because women don't want to go into nursing. They have other options. So that's what's causing this shortage right now. And why do they do they have other options is also nursing is traditionally a woman's occupation and women would like to do something different. So I think, again, a lot of the chronic problems in this industry – remember both my sisters are nurses – is it's really sexist at its root. It's an underappreciated venue.

MS. ERBE: What kind of nurses are they?

MS. BENNETT: One daughter – listen to me, daughter – sister. Remember, I raised my sister – oncologist – on the oncology floor and the other one works with older geriatric patients.

MS. ERBE: Because, I mean, I have a friend who's a nurse, who makes in the six figures. And I was shocked to find that out. But they really are paying – you know, what –

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: They do pay well. But what's really interesting is that if you look at a male nurse's salary and a female nurse's salary, men tend to make more in nursing – there's still a wage gap there though, even though it's a traditional female –

MS. WOOD: So could we try to get more men in it, because there's no enough.

MS. SETMAYER: I don't really know what the answer is here. I know that in California, we have an issue with importing Philippine nurses. And that's been a source of controversy because they're bidding down the wages of the nurses in California. And, you know –

MS. ERBE: I think that's happening all over.

MS. SETMAYER: Yeah. Well, you know, I work for a California congresswoman so I use California as the most stark example.

But, you know, with the baby boomers getting older and retiring and getting sicker as they get older, yeah. What are we going to do here? And with the way the health care system, it's one seventh of our – or sixth, one sixth of our economy.

You know, I could never be a nurse. I can't look at a paper cut. I'll pass out. God bless people who can go to that profession. But, you know, I'm not quite sure. I don't think government, more government or anything is the answer. I just think that –

MS. ERBE: More grants? You don't think –

MS. SETMAYER: Well, I mean, I would like to see another study about where those grants are and where they go. I don't want that to be a single source being –

MS. WOOD: We've got to give – government's got to fund food stamps; now we've got to fund nursing. You know, eventually, you know, as Margaret Thatcher said, you run out of other people's money. And so we've got to decide what's most important.

MS. ERBE: Do you agree?

MS. BENNETT: Absolutely. And I think – but let's be honest about what's going on here. We have structural sexism going on. And I don't have any easy answers how to solve it. But my family has done its part. Both my sisters – we've done our part.

MS. ERBE: Right. You have definitely contributed to the lack – to – you have definitely pushed down the nursing shortage.

MS. BENNETT: That's right.

MS. ERBE: And we thank you very much for that.

MS. BENNETT: You're welcome.

MS. ERBE: That's it for this edition of *To the Contrary*. Please follow me on Twitter @BonnieErbe and #tothecontrary. And visit our website, pbs.org/tothecontrary where the discussion continues. Whether you agree or think to the contrary, please join us next time.

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