



HOST:

BONNIE ERBE

GUESTS:

SIOBHAN BENNETT,

DEL. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON (D-DC),

SABRINA SCHAEFFER,

RINA SHAH

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BONNIE ERBE: This week on *To the Contrary*, first, the face of human trafficking. Then, women enlist despite reports of sexual assault in the military. Behind the headlines, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's plan to reward working families.

(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, sex trafficking.

(Begin video segment.)

STEPHANIE VU: I went to a party and I met this guy. He was nice and he was older. He led me to believe he was a boyfriend until I found out his real intentions.

I was trafficked for two years. I went back home when I was released and my trafficker had sent someone to my house and they raped me.

MS. ERBE: After years of hiding, Stephanie Vu is showing her face again.

MS. VU: Now what I do is I go to school, a mother and a wife, and I help train small groups on what trafficking is and how girls get into it.

MS. ERBE: Vu decided she was ready to go public to bring attention to a new report. Shared Hope International, an anti-trafficking group, graded all 50 states. The grades were based on whether states were punishing perpetrators and helping victims.

FORMER REP. LINDA SMITH: The buy-in of commercial sex with children that is driving the market for their abduction, their victimization, and their sale has not been a primary focus for most people because we didn't realize that ordinary kids, to the tune of over 100,000 a year, were being brought into the commercial sex world and being sold to ordinary men in the United States.

MS. ERBE: Almost three quarters received a C or below, but there is good news. More than half raised their grades over last year.

(End video segment.)

MS. ERBE: So Congresswoman Norton, why is modern day slavery allowed to exist in this country?

DEL. ELANOR HOLMES NORTON (D-DC): Bonnie, I think because most modern day slaves are children, girls, or very young women, assumed to be complicit with prostitution or with the very trafficking that is occurring by men.

RINA SHAH: It's very scary that this is happening, but with this transparent age that we're living, thank goodness, there is light being brought to this issue because it's very scary to think that at some point women are always looked at prostituting themselves. Now they've changed that and women are being seeing victims of something going on. I think it's going to take elected officials to really help raise the voices of these victims and do something to help.

SIOBHAN BENNETT: It's hard to detect. It's hard to know it's going on if you're looking on the outside in. And your average American has absolutely no idea how prevailing this is – none.

SABRINA SCHAEFFER: That's right. I would say that there's no – you know – single silver bullet to fixing the problem, which is one of the largest challenges, I think, to actually reversing the trend and making things better.

MS. ERBE: Well, Homeland Security has jurisdiction on the federal level. And since states are doing uneven jobs of this, as we see in this report, then why isn't that all being done federally?

DEL. NORTON: Actually, there's a lot of interest in trafficking federally and for – I can't recall now, but there are some trafficking laws on the books, federal trafficking laws on the books.

MS. ERBE: But usually they don't share jurisdiction like that. Why doesn't it all become federal?

DEL. NORTON: No, well, it shouldn't be because it is a local crime and it should be a national or federal crime as well. It's – what encourages me is that the laws that the states are enacting make clear that you needn't show coercion, you needn't show fraud, you simply have to show the position of the trafficker relative to the position of the modern day slave. That means that most girls and those who are under age, certainly, are going to be treated differently. And they even were not. They, too, were seen as prostitutes. They, too, were asked questions like, well, did you go with him? Well, yes, she went with him. She went of her own consent under 18 with him. That's the kind of thing that is being wiped off the books today.

MS. SCHAEFFER: I think some of the legal changes and certainly the name changing can be a good thing in terms of raising awareness, but it still seems like the best thing that can be done is to talk to children and to talk to more – to children because it's not always children who you think are going to be at risk. I mean, I've certainly read numerous stories of sort of the upper middle class young woman, who everyone thought was, you know, the lacrosse player, and next thing you know, she's involved with something. And it's because they cross state lines. The rings get moved. Children get moved between things. And there's sort of an underreporting of what's happening. So the more that we can sort of have an open conversation about it, I think it's healthy.

MS. ERBE: Well, should all states pass safe harbor laws, which means to treat young women who are prostituted against their will, whether they're taken literally as slaves and stuck in a room somewhere and taken away from their families, or as in some cases, living at home and being trafficked, should all states treat the young girls as the target, as opposed to – and treat the men as the perpetrators?

MS. BENNETT: Absolutely. Safe harbor laws, I think, go a long way towards raising awareness, but also I think someone pointed this out. I think if we can have a shift from seeing the young woman as choosing, this, right, there's a sort of implicit assumption that if you're as I was – I was one of those young women that was locked in a room, men were brought in to me, and finally I escaped because the slaver was dying in his bed from a knife wound, right? And one of the other women let me out. But I think that if there was a shift in safe harbor laws, right, which help move perception, but also a shift to seeing this less as this young woman has decided to do this and more as – even if it doesn't seem that it's against her will, a.k.a. she's living at home, there's a level of coercion, there's a level of fear.

There's a level of almost brainwashing that goes on with this that really prevents the crime from being detected and prevents it from being – I don't know if the right word is, Congresswoman, “fixed,” but I think that's what's underneath a lot of this.

MS. SHAH: Sure, I think – again, I want to go back to laws and how this criminal justice system we have in this country needs to be reformed and at many levels. I agree that this is not a federal issue entirely. States and local governments need to do what they can do. And I think it was a really great move by the Virginia GOP attorney general candidate Mark Obenshain, who in August unveiled a plan about – in his state – let's attack this problem. Let's bring light to it. So I think different state officials like this need to do things like that. They need to unveil plans, not just one law is going to fix this, not just one action. It's going to be a multitude of things.

MS. ERBE: This new focus on – you know – imprisoning the buyers, is that going to work? Is that – I mean, they call – you know – it used to call prostitution, now trafficking, the oldest – or for the most part trafficking – the older profession –

DEL. NORTON: I think we'll figure that out. Why in the world, you know, did this begin with putting the women in jail and not the men? If you really wanted to take care of this problem – (laughs) – he was here with the trafficker, it would go away.

MS. ERBE: Do you think so? Do you think –

DEL. NORTON: Oh, my goodness, I just – well, it's harder if you're talking about prostitution in the streets. I understand that. But traffickers, my heavens, use the women to get to the trafficker, just as you use somebody who was on small amounts of drugs to get to the real villain in the piece.

MS. ERBE: But you know, there's been – I'm trying to get my hands around this story because it's just so mind blowing to think – and you know, people like you coming out, it's so important to talk about how it's happened. And you, incredibly doing – now running a national women's organization. My God, you're my hero. But I just – has it always been going on and we just didn't know about it? Does changing it to trafficking from prostitution put a whole new light on it? It seems like in the last –

DEL. NORTON: I think has facilitated this – we cannot forget that. That now there is – you talked about under the wire as it were, this is – much of this goes on where nobody could see it. And how are we going to get a hold of it when you have worldwide internet, I'm not sure.

MS. SCHAEFFER: Well, and I do worry about using – you know – unintended consequence of using the word “trafficking” is that it may make people think that this is a problem overseas, right? Not right here in your backyard. And prostitution is something that we do talk about in this country and maybe that's more familiar, so it's something to consider.

MS. ERBE: All right. Let us know what you think. Please follow me on Twitter @BonnieErbe or @TotheContrary.

From sex trafficking to women in the military.

This Veterans Day, sexual assault continues to be a problem in the military, but the risk is apparently not stopping women from joining. All four branches of the military say recruitment remains steady and women are signing up. It's hard to tell how sexual assault figures into women's decisions when they enlist. The economic benefits of a military career are very appealing in a sluggish economy. And the services run very effective recruitment ad campaigns. Recruiters tell all the advantages of signing up, but will only talk about sexual assault when asked.

Critics say women may just not know what they're signing up for.

So should recruiters be required to tell women and men – I mean, there's – ironically – just as much sexual assault against men as there is against women in the military anyway. Should they be required to tell recruits, hey, this is happening?

MS. BENNETT: To be honest, I'm not sure about that. Coming from a military family, ex-ROTC Ranger myself, I think my reaction to that is – because, of course, the reports – the increasing reports on military assault has not decreased the number of women that used to enlist. We as women, sadly, expect nonsense to happen. I think the problem with the military is because it's a government entity and a government agency, one would hope and assume that it would be more safe and controlled environment than other places that women go.

So to be honest, Bonnie, having just said that, I guess they should.

DEL. NORTON: Yeah, but could I – you know – normally – and these are the best advertisers and recruiters in the United States because they've been doing so since the beginning of time, the armed services. Normally, you put your best foot forward. You want to say, and by the way, you know, there's a lot of sexual harassment going on in here, don't you want to join us? However, having said that, the best defense may be an offense. Do your normal recruiting and say, by the way, you may have heard – you may have heard about some sexual harassment that we're dealing with –

MS. ERBE: Not harassment, assault. I mean, there is a difference.

DEL. NORTON: Put it out there. You may have heard that as in civilian life, there is rape and there are things that – the difference is we're the military. And it's easier to take care of that in the military because it's part of the command, of how a soldier must react. It's not a college campus. Put it out there as a part of your spiel. Do your spiel first, but then make sure that people know you're not giving a spiel by telling them the whole truth.

MS. SHAH: I'll agree to that end. I think it's really important that they bring light to it in some way. But they don't have to be defensive. What employer has to be defensive and come out and say, OK, we're going to defend ourselves about these accusations that you've heard? The biggest thing here is that women are resilient. We're strong and I think the biggest thing is that really, when you're signing up for something, you don't think about the ugly part of it. You think I need to do what I need to do. And they're still signing up because they realized that in civilian life, they're not even 100 percent safe there.

MS. BENNETT: There's a difference I want – the point of Kirsten – Senator Gillibrand's work around this is in normal civilian life, in corporate America, if my boss raped me, I have an HR Department. I have somebody I can go to. The problem in the military is there is no upward. And it's squashed. It's not reported. That's really the crux of the issue here.

MS. ERBE: And I – I mean, I have a friend whose daughter joined the Navy last year and is a submariner and I was thinking – I didn't say anything, but I was – you know – that's kind of one of the worst places, stuck in a submarine for months at a time.

MS. SCHAEFFER: Yeah, and I think there're certain things that you just can't get around, right? You have gender integrated training and you have young men and women in their, you know, late teens, early 20s, you have them in confined spaces for long periods of time. We may have to sort of rethink if this is a good environment for your child or for you as an individual. There're some real harsh realities that I think we have to talk about. It just may not be entirely fixable.

MS. ERBE: So and therefore, what? You mean to take women out of –

MS. SCHAEFFER: I don't think you have to take women out of combat, but I think that women need to give it some serious thought.

DEL. NORTON: I think it is fixable because just as women –

MS. BENNETT: It's very fixable.

DEL. NORTON: – are new to the armed services, so this is new. And so you would expect that these kids who come out of an environment, let's face it, where a lot of this is tolerated, would bring that straight with them into the armed forces. I think it's fixable. I think it must be fixed. I think it's not being fixed fast enough. And I think the senator's push on it is exactly what needs to happen.

MS. SHAH: Reforms are necessary, I agree, but not at the recruitment level because, again, that's kind of ugly. I think, again, a private company wouldn't do that in their recruitment.

MS. SCHAEFFER: And also with all the attention focused on women, we are missing the fact that 26,000 men were sexually assaulted in 2012. And it was up by –

MS. ERBE: Wait, I thought it was 26,000 people, men and women.

MS. SCHAEFFER: I heard men. Men reported 19,000 in 2010. And you know, as much as I'm obviously concerned about how women are faring, we have to sort of think about this in the terms of assaults in general –

DEL. NORTON: I don't actually – all of those are sexual assaults.

MS. SCHAEFFER: Those are the numbers I've read –

DEL. NORTON: Well, yeah –

MS. BENNETT: Whatever the reported figure is, the real figure is higher, let's be honest. That's been well researched. I think this is absolutely something that is fixable, but it has to be fixed. It's a great example of why we need more – my drummer, all right – why we need more women in elected office because with Senator Gillibrand that pushed this forward, she got the other senators bipartisan to join her in this, but it needs to be fixed at the federal level. It needs to be enforced because the problem is the military has all these barriers that go on that some of those barriers are important for the military to function well and do its job. But I think this is a very fixable but hence a lot of work that needs to be done.

MS. ERBE: All right. Behind the headlines, the face of the nation's workforce is changing, but laws governing the workforce are mostly static. U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Democrat of New York, insists that needs to change.

She told *To the Contrary* when current policies don't do enough to protect working women, the entire economy suffers.

(Begin video segment.)

SENATOR KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND (D-NY): I'm introducing legislation called the FAMILY Act and it's quite simple. It provides for paid family medical leave for all employees that is a safety net that is invested in by all employees over their lifetimes. For less than a couple of coffee a week, they will provide money into a savings account that will then be used when they need to take their leave.

MS. ERBE: Gillibrand plans to introduce the Family and Medical Insurance Leave Act or FAMILY Act this month as part of her five-point American Opportunity Agenda. Her plan to empower working families and strengthen the middle class includes paid family and medical leave, affordable daycare, universal pre-K, equal pay for equal work, and raising the minimum wage.

SEN. GILLIBRAND: These are things so commonsense and they help women and men and our whole middle class thrive because their families are cared for. A new mother has time with her infant or a woman or a man who has aging parent or someone in their family who's gravely ill has that flexibility to be able to meet the needs of their family for a few months, but still not only retain their job, but be able to get paid, so they can come back ready to work hard and provide for their companies.

MS. ERBE: Women's rights advocates charge workplace policies reflect a 1950s mentality rather than today's reality. More households than ever have two working adults. And women are the sole wage earners in 40 percent of families with children under the age of 18. Gillibrand says new legislation is needed because the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act or FMLA is outdated and ineffective in today's workplace.

The FAMILY Act would require employers and employees to contribute 0.2 percent of their salaries up to a little more than \$4 each week.

SEN. GILLIBRAND: I want it to be an earned benefit for all American workers. That will make a difference for all companies. And I can tell you that companies like this, big and small. Small businesses like it because they don't have to create a program. It's going to only be just like Social Security.

MS. ERBE: Workers would receive two thirds of their pay for up to 12 weeks of leave. It could be for their own or a family member's serious illness, the birth or adoption of a child, or an emergency involving a family member in the military.

Gillibrand says some large companies already have paid leave plans.

SEN. GILLIBRAND: There's many, many forward-looking companies that have paid family medical leave. They just think it's an important benefit that they offer their

employees because they want productive workers. They want a happy workforce. They want loyal employees. And that's what it actually creates for them.

MS. ERBE: As a mother, Gillibrand knows firsthand the importance of the FAMILY Act. And as a working professional, she has experience drafting similar policy.

SEN. GILLIBRAND: The second law firm I worked for, I actually wrote the Paid Family Medical Leave policy for them, so that members of the firm could have paid leave. It made a huge difference when I had my first child. When I had Theo, having that few months off to be able to learn how to nurse, learn how to be a mom, learn how crazy life is if you have a baby at home, it just allowed me to reenter the workforce three months later rested and able and ready to begin that lifelong juggle of how to be a good mom and a good worker at the same time.

(End video segment.)

MS. ERBE: Your thoughts, Sabrina.

MS. SCHAEFFER: Well, I can sympathize with this entire segment. I have three young children and I work, so I understand that there are real needs for women and for men to take time out of the workforce. I don't think that this law is the answer. I don't think that expanding FMLA is the answer. And I think that the better response would come from businesses and from individuals. If in Washington we can do things to change the tax policy, so that people could better save for themselves, if we can make our health care not tied to our employer, so changing the subsidies, these are real tangible things that can be done to give women and men the kind of flexibility they need when they do need to leave the workplace.

DEL. NORTON: Look, let's take an example. I don't know what women you all are talking about, but let's look at who took advantage of the Family – this is a bill, by the way, that I supported strongly. It's a bill of the last feminist generation, the Family Medical and Leave Act. Women already had leave who worked for companies, who were in the upper part of the workforce. It didn't do a thing for the average woman. It didn't do a thing for – you're talking about tax laws – what does that do for minimum wage workers? And 40 percent of the minimum wage – the majority of the minimum wage workers are women. What about women who are lower even on the totem pole, who are not minimum wage workers? What about the hundreds of thousands of businesses that don't have any leave policy, so that even when you are sick you go to work? This is a problem, if for no other reason, for humanity's sake that we simply have to confront.

Now, this is an earned benefit. This isn't the government putting in the money, not a cent of it. It comes out of everybody's paycheck. We can talk about how much it should be, but let me – let me guarantee you that every single individual who works will one day need to take some time off, either for themselves or for a family member.

MS. SHAH: You're right on that point, but what concerns me most here is that the increased tax burden this puts on our working families, this is putting a burden on both the employer and the employee. It's going to take out of everybody's cost there. And small businesses, there's no exceptions for them here. Small businesses under 50 employees are not helped by FMLA currently. And I think the senator's intention was good.

Again, I don't have any children, but I can tell you. This is an issue that will come up for everybody, every family. And the intention was good, but the tax burden, setting up a Social Security trust fund type thing, where's the long-term solvency of that kind of thing? We're seeing Social Security right now. Where is that?

MS. SCHAEFFER: And if I can – one thing that has changed so much since the original passage of FMLA is the value of women to the workplace. Right now, women make up nearly 50 percent of the workforce. The majority of women who are working have higher degrees and require higher skills. So we are talking that women are extremely valuable part of the workforce. And I think that we have to remember that businesses, when they invest in any employee, men or women, it's an investment in their salaries and in their intellectual capital. They don't want to see women leaving the workforce. They want to help retain them more and more. And so I think we need to remember that businesses are not quite, you know, these evil corporate entities that are so willing to dismiss women because –

(Cross talk.)

MS. BENNETT: Wait a minute. Wait a minute. I don't think that's what's going on here at all. And – but if I could, let's provide a little global perspective. We have got the worst track record here of any of our fellow nations in the world, of the developed nations, right, where paid leave is just assumed there. Now, we don't want to turn into the next Sweden or Norway. I get that, right. But –

MS. ERBE: But let me – can I jump in here for a second because a friend of mine from graduate school who's Polish told me that the countries that offer paid leave really do need to kind of bribe women to have babies there.

MS. BENNETT: That's right.

MS. ERBE: They have very low immigration rates.

MS. BENNETT: That's right.

MS. ERBE: They restrict immigration. And they don't have a young workforce. And that's why they put these benefits in place. We, with huge levels of immigration, have tons of young people ready to go into the workforce. It's a different problem.

MS. BENNETT: No, but – yes and no. It depends on the country you look at. If you're looking at Germany, you're right. OK, they have a declining birthrate. It's hard to get German women to go into the workplace.

MS. ERBE: Most of Western Europe.

MS. BENNETT: Well, that's not absolutely totally correct for every nation, but I think the importance here is if you know, as we all agree, everyone's going to go through this at some point in their life. Last year, both my parents got ill, moved into my home in hospice and both died last year. Plus both my daughters got married and I had my first granddaughter. So it's was a good year and a sad year. But we all know we're going to go through that. That is the absolute definition of something where the government should come in and create a program that everyone can benefit from.

(Cross talk.)

MS. BENNETT: But fund it – and I think the funding model here, as you pointed out, is a good one. We each put a little money in so that we can all fund this together because we're all going to go through it.

DEL. NORTON: No, she didn't – she wasn't for it because –

(Cross talk.)

DEL. NORTON: – she sees it as, quote, “tax,” so she has an immediate turnoff. You know what, you know, what Republican women ought to do, because both of you sympathize of this, is to say how can we get together and make this work.

MS. ERBE: All right. We are out of time. I'm sorry, I just cut the queue. 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. And whether you agree or think to the contrary, please join us next time.

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