



## Navajo Nation Washington Office

Email: [info@nnwo.org](mailto:info@nnwo.org)

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### **Bipartisan group in the House of Representative's Introduces a Bill to Help Human Trafficking Survivors**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – On Tuesday, January 31, 2024, Republican Congressman Russell Fry of South Carolina, leading a bipartisan coalition, introduced a bill whose goal is to establish a federal law expunging any crime a human trafficking survivor committed because of being a victim of human trafficking. The goal of [H.R.7137](#) is “to provide for the vacating of certain convictions and expungement of certain arrests of victims of human trafficking” which means that it will provide a federal law that will allow for human trafficking survivor’s to apply for expunging of certain non-violent offenses that they were forced to do while being trafficked.

Along with Congressman Russell Fry, the bill was sponsored by one Republican Congresswoman, Ann Wagner of Missouri, and two Democratic Congressmen, Ted Lieu and Robert Garcia of California.

In a statement to CNN, Congressman Fry explained that he takes pride in having introduced this bill, as human trafficking is a grave reality that impacts communities worldwide and within the United States, and thus the survivors should be helped rather than prevented from healing due to the weight of a criminal conviction on their record. This bill is supported by multiple interest groups such as the National Survivor Law Collective Policy Group. The bill failed to move forward two previous times that it was introduced, but supporters are hopeful that negotiations to introduce a Senate version will be successful.

Given the disproportionate impact of human trafficking on the Native community, this bill could be a great help to tribal citizens and their families who have been impacted by human trafficking. Though it will do little to provide actual healing to Native victims, it will at least ease some of the barriers to their reintegration to their local communities by removing some of the legal penalties that sometimes attach to human trafficking victims.