Mr. Speaker, today I rise to mark January as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month.

Millions of people are subjected to sex trafficking or forced labor every year.

Each January we take time to recognize the continuing scourge of human trafficking, but it is never easy to accept or believe that this horrible practice still continues in the 21st Century.

And this is not a problem only in far off foreign lands – it is happening right here, in our own country. We know this in the East Bay, which I represent, in which there is a significant problem with human trafficking and sex exploitation.

That is why we are so fortunate to have Alameda County District Attorney Nancy O’Malley fighting back hard against these traffickers and standing up for victims.

Earlier this month Nancy announced her office’s latest public relations campaign to help raise awareness about the tragedy of sex trafficking and make sure victims know how they can obtain help. She even has a special division within her office, called the Human Exploitation and Trafficking (H.E.A.T.) Unit, to fight trafficking.

I want to thank Nancy and everyone in the H.E.A.T. Unit for the work they do to help and protect the women and children of the East Bay. It is this kind of diligence and dedication that will hopefully, one day, bring an end to human trafficking and sexual exploitation once and for all.