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NEWS RELEASE **FROM THE OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER TIM ECHOLS** **Echols Hosts “Unholy Tour” to Highlight Human Trafficking in Atlanta**

ATLANTA – January 21, 2015 - On Tuesday evening, January 20, 2015, Public Service Commissioner Tim Echols assembled a group of legislators, elected officials and concerned citizens for what he called an "Unholy Tour." Echols, using a donated bus from Samson Trailways, took the group into areas of Atlanta where sex trafficking and prostitution is rampant.

"Sex Trafficking is a blight on our city and state," Echols said. "We hope this tour will aid lawmakers in their effort to effectively reduce this heinous activity."

Leading the tour was Kasey McClure from the 4Sarah organization. 4Sarah's mission is to provide outreach to women who are still in "the life" and to coordinate with other organizations to provide support and counseling to those who have gotten out.

Echols said he got the idea from the movie "Amazing Grace" where William Wilberforce, the British Parliamentarian, rented a boat and took fellow lawmakers for a tour of the London harbor with a sobering stop near a slave ship. There, Wilberforce told them a gruesome story of how slaves were captured, transported and treated. He successfully ended the slave trade after working for over two decades on the effort.

Commissioner Echols, an Atlanta native, and a father of four daughters, said he is very concerned about the men enslaving these women, and the men purchasing their services from "pimps" in the Atlanta area.

Echols said that on a global scale, human trafficking, also known as "modern day slavery," is the second largest criminal enterprise after drug trafficking. The number of victims today (28 million) far surpasses the number of victims of the transatlantic slave trade (~15 million).

According to the Carter Center, Atlanta is ranked number one for Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the United States with between 100 and 200 girls sold into slavery each month.

"The out-of-control sex trade in Atlanta is intrinsically tied to the abominable act of human trafficking occurring in our nation," said Echols. "We all need to work to end it and put those responsible for enslaving these women in prison for a long time."

Commissioner Echols is in his fifth year on the Georgia Public Service Commission, having been elected statewide in November, 2010. His complete biography and photo are found on the Commission web site at <http://www.psc.state.ga.us/pscinfo/bios/echols.asp?tab=Tab2>.

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