



Senator Ellen M. Corbett
State Capitol, Room 313
Sacramento, CA 95814

March 21, 2011

RE: Support for SB 861

Dear Senator Corbett:

Free The Slaves applauds your introduction of SB 861, prohibiting California State contracts with companies that fail to comply with federal reporting requirements on Congo's conflict minerals. As one of the largest anti-slavery organizations in the U.S., Free The Slaves represents over 3,200 Californian constituents who are watching with increasing concern and outrage the escalating crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The conflict in Congo is the deadliest since World War II, claiming more than 5.4 million lives since 1998. Ongoing conflict has also given rise to severe human rights abuses. Free the Slaves and Congolese human rights organizations have [documented multiple forms of modern slavery](#) in mining areas of North Kivu, eastern Congo. These abuses include forced labor and debt bondage connected directly to mining activities. Slavery in eastern Congo also includes the use of child soldiers, the abuse of children in prostitution, and other forms of sexual slavery. These abuses constitute recognized violations of slavery and human trafficking under international law and relevant U.S. laws.

SB 861 is a landmark piece of legislation that will help curb the multi-million dollar trade in illegally extracted minerals from eastern Congo. Greed for Congo's mineral wealth on the part of armed groups and rebel militias has been instrumental in fueling the war and associated atrocities in the DRC, including slavery. The armed groups that are perpetuating the violence finance themselves through the trade in four main minerals: tin, tantalum, tungsten, and gold - essential raw materials for electronics products such as cell phones, digital cameras and laptops. California is rightly proud of its high-tech industry, but should not be spending tax dollars on companies that fail to comply with federal law.

Federal legislation enacted last July as part of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform Act requires companies to report on their mineral supply chains, disclose whether they are sourcing minerals from the DRC or its neighbors, and exercise due diligence to ensure that they are not inadvertently serving to fund armed groups committing atrocities there. The passage of SB 861 will be pivotal in incentivizing compliance with these Federal Regulations.

4025 Spencer Street #104
Torrance, CA 90503
Toll free 866.324.FREE
Phone 310.371.4888
Fax 310.542.6771
info@freetheslaves.net
WWW.FREETHESLAVES.NET

INTERNATIONAL ADVISOR
Desmond M. Tutu
Archbishop Emeritus
Cape Town, South Africa

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Helen Armstrong
Coventry, CT

Robert Boneberg
Lowenstein Sandler PC
New York, NY

Bryn Freedman
Los Angeles, CA

Franka Jordan
Washington, DC

Stephen Maher
Risk Capital Strategies, LLC
Avon, CT

Xavier Plassat
CPT - Pastoral Land Commission
Brazil

John Zarafonitis
Washington, DC

SENIOR STAFF
Kevin Bales
Co-founder | President

Jolene Smith
Co-founder | CEO

Peggy Callahan
Co-founder
Executive Producer
Communications Director

Nancy Hammond
Director of Finance and
Administration

Karen Stauss
Director of Programs

Free the Slaves is a
non-profit non-partisan
organization dedicated to
ending slavery worldwide
We have 501(c)3 registration as
Anti-Slavery International, Inc.

PAPER 100% RECYCLED

SB 861 can help neutralize one of the key economic drivers of the conflict in Congo and protect the country's children from a future stigmatized by violence and brutality. By passing it, California has the opportunity to show, once again, that it is a leader in protecting the rights of the most vulnerable in the world by encouraging the development of verifiably conflict-free products.

Free The Slaves looks forward to swift passage of SB 861. Please do not hesitate to contact me by [email](#) or phone with any questions.

Thank you for your consideration.



Karen Stauss
Director of Programs
Free The Slaves