

OPINION

GUEST COMMENTARY

Human Trafficking Awareness Month: Creating a wave of change

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& LAUREN

DOLL-SHEEDER

OWNER OF DOLL

DISTRIBUTING

Learn Something, Do Something.

This mission may be simple, but it can shape Iowa's approach to combating human trafficking. As we observe Human Trafficking Awareness Month this January, it's a powerful reminder that every community, every business, and every individual has a role to play — not just now, but all year long.

Right now, an estimated 50 million individuals are being exploited through human trafficking worldwide. It's easy to think something like this doesn't happen in Iowa, but the reality is that it does. In 2024, the Department of Safety received more than 100 tips on labor and sex trafficking. In addition to this, there were more than 200 calls to the Iowa Victim Service Call Center in 2024.

Recognizing that this crime is happening within our state is a critical first step toward eradicating all instances of human trafficking within Iowa's borders. It starts with raising awareness.

Awareness can begin with a single voice — a drop of water that, when joined by others, becomes a ripple, then a wave. Every conversation, flyer, educational event, or resource shared adds to our momentum. When Iowa businesses and individuals commit to learning something and speaking out, we create a current too strong to ignore. In Iowa, a wave is already forming. It starts with a simple but profound mission: Learn Something, Do Something.

That's the mission of Iowa Businesses Against Trafficking (IBAT), a program administered by the Iowa Secretary of State's Office and Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate. Businesses, organizations and governmental agencies across the state have stepped up to make their communities safer and more informed. By joining IBAT, they've made a concrete commitment: to raise awareness, educate employees, and be a part of the solution. Each member, each employee, adds to our ripple — helping us turn a small drop of water into a wave.

IBAT members in nearly all of Iowa's 99 counties are taking time each year to Learn Something about human trafficking. From hosting training sessions to distributing educational materials, these businesses are helping their teams recognize the signs of human trafficking and understand how to respond effectively. This work is especially vital in industries with a higher likelihood of encountering trafficking — such as financial services, hospitality, and transportation — where frontline awareness can make a life-saving difference. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by these industries, IBAT offers an extensive online resource library with resources developed by expert anti-trafficking organizations,

designed to support businesses in training and identifying and responding to human trafficking.

Many of IBAT's members are taking it a step further and taking real, tangible action to Do Something to prevent this crime or support survivors. Whether it be sharing educational content on social media or in company newsletters, posting flyers in brick and mortar locations, providing safe spaces for at-risk individuals, including trafficking awareness in employee handbooks, or participating in community events and partnering with anti-trafficking organizations — IBAT members are turning awareness into impact every day. Reinforcing the idea that every business, no matter its size or industry, can play a role in protecting and supporting victims and survivors.

As an IBAT member, Doll Distributing has integrated anti-trafficking efforts into the core of its operations — making them a consistent part of strategic planning and communications. This intentional approach reflects how businesses can amplify IBAT's mission to Learn Something and Do Something.

At Doll Distributing, a third-generation family-owned and operated beverage distributor based in Des Moines, the team has taken the "Learn Something" aspect of IBAT to heart through internal education programs. By regularly engaging staff through facts and surveys about human trafficking, and combining engagement and education, the entire team stays informed and carries their knowledge into their own communities.

Efforts to "Do Something" about human trafficking are also prioritized: The Human Trafficking Hotline number and IBAT logo are placed prominently on delivery trucks, turning fleets into mobile awareness campaigns across Iowa. During Human Trafficking Awareness Month, billboards are leveraged throughout the Des Moines area, especially in high-visibility locations, to raise awareness beyond employees and into the larger community.

On Jan. 22, the Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking hosted the annual Outstanding Anti-Trafficking Service Awards, presented by Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds. Doll Distributing was selected as one of five recipients thanks to their efforts surrounding IBAT and their commitment to educating their employees to identify and report signs of trafficking.

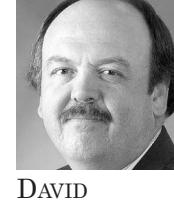
Human trafficking is happening here in Iowa — and we have the power to stop it. Every new IBAT member is one more drop of water, helping build a ripple effect that grows into a wave of awareness and prevention across our state. This Human Trafficking Awareness Month, we're asking you to join the cause. Learn Something and Do Something about human trafficking — or take the next step and become an IBAT member at ibat.iowa.gov. Together, we can create a safer Iowa for all.

LETTERS WELCOME — Readers are invited to submit letters to the editor with comments, criticisms, praise and/or questions about issues of interest. The editor reserves the right to edit letters. All need to be signed. Unsigned letters will not be considered. Readers should include their address and phone number to verify their identity. Addresses and phone numbers will not be printed.

OPINION NOTICE — The opinions expressed in columns, guest editorials and letters to the editor are not necessarily shared by the staff.

THE COMMSTOCK REPORT

Too many worst-case scenarios to choose from



DAVID
KRUSE

COMMSTOCK
INVESTMENTS

The gargantuan global debt and the prospect of a trade war generated a slowdown of the world economy as investors are looking for safe havens. Historically, that has been precious metals, and both gold and silver have been reflecting their traditional role as safe havens. Our family portfolio silver ETFs have quadrupled

in value. Central banks have been accumulating gold instead of currency reserves, which tells you what they think. Banks are not speculating ... they have no intention of selling this gold so the market may never see it again. If gold soars to \$10,000 ounce, the conditions that push it there will be too scary to sell it. While precious metals values have noticeably risen, nothing crisis-like has yet occurred to the economy. The wealthy are still spending, with the top 10% doing 50% of the commerce. They are also the ones owning most of the stocks. Equity markets are floating gains on AI euphoria. What could go wrong? What would precious metals values do if something did?

The new kid on the block, vying to become a safe haven for capital, is crypto. It is the sexy, "hey ... everyone ... look at me!" ... Ponzi-scheme of this cycle, vying to become a bona fide asset class. It has a long way to go before it becomes that, and I do not believe it will survive the kiln if tested. While in theory it has some characteristics of a safe haven in that it is not controlled by any government, it sure easily could be if ever perceived as a threat. That is why crypto took a new lease on life when the Trump family embraced it so aggressively. The Trump family has created every kind of crypto. They saw the potential graft in it and joined the crypto team. Crypto is the sewer under safe havens, with price appreciation determined by the greater fool theory until they all try to cash out. Eric Trump's little white rear end will be seen running away as fast as his legs can carry him when that happens. You can make more crypto. You cannot print more gold.

I turtled up in 2025, giving metals the most attention I have ever given them, holding silver, gold and platinum ... while moving toward liquidity. I am done with capital spending for a while. A fixed-rate mortgage on a home or farm is fine if serviceable by a dependable income, but debt, subject to interest rate volatility, is not. Stock and bond market valuations bear high risk. I would like to take speculative short positions in the S&P but am on tiptoes. This is not short-term positioning, so patience is in order. I would like to add the risk of staying out six months or more ahead of the market. The premium deferred structure of the S&P makes put options attractive. But the market trend is still up, so probes should be kept conservative. When they decide that Warren Buffett (now retired) was a fool for Berkshire's accumulation of so much cash, then the hammer will fall. Valuations are extremely high, and bubbles are forming, but the coming fallout will be of a depth and duration that one would not need to pick the top, although that would be fun if gotten right. The Samuel Benner cycle suggests a top in stocks this

year. I think that a major top this year is highly likely, but timing confounded even Jesse Livermore, said to be the greatest stock market trader ever. Today's Cassandras, market traders and pundits... examples being Ray Dalio, Paul Tudor Jones, Micheal Burry, Andrew Ross Sorkin, Scott Galloway and others are all struggling with timing. Jesse Livermore made \$100 million in one day during the 1929 crash (what he told his wife) but said he probed the market unsuccessfully several times before it collapsed.

Things to be wary of in 2026 are ... 1) the Supreme Court Ruling on President Donald Trump's tariffs. Even if negative, Trump will be ready to punt. Tariffs have gone from something conceptual to something critical as a needed source of revenue to assuage the growing debt. They will be repaired and maintained at all costs. 2) A new Fed Chairman replaces Powell in May. Trump wants lower interest rates which would sustain markets. Powell will step down as Chairman in May but will he remain on the board as allowed for two more years? Trump is trying to discredit Powell with bogus criminal indictments so as to prevent that. Trump's pick will be as pliant to his will as can be confirmed by the Senate. With the passing of the BBBA by Congress, Trump has exhibited his control over fiscal policy. He literally cannot stand the idea that someone else, other than him, is independently controlling monetary policy. 3) There is a mid-term election next November and failing to retain control of Congress could restrain Trump's agenda for the rest of the term. That would be intolerable to him. ICE may well show up as intimidation as poll watchers. He wants the Senate filibuster eliminated. Trump will go to all extremes to try to mitigate any loss. He will have a plan ready for that. Every lever and measure possible to circumvent Congress will be pulled and taken. Jan 6th was just a warm-up to the real event 4) Trump will tell us that the economy is the greatest ever A+++ regardless what the data says and if the data says something contrary to his narrative, those in government producing it will change the narrative to whatever he wants it to be in order to keep their jobs. Credibility will only then exist for those who really don't care about credibility. Given a year to get his administration ready to manage the news, along with his intimidation of the media, expect the "news machine" to be positive. CBS is becoming See-BS. 5) Expect Trump's foreign policy will be successful in 2026. This is the game of his life and no one is better at playing it. China, Russia, Ukraine, Iran, Hezbollah, Gaza, Greenland/Denmark, Canada, Mexico, Columbia and Cuba along with anyone else who happens to cross his radar will be managed. Success will convert skeptics. Success precedes hubris and hubris eventually brings the House down. There is some time yet for success. 6) Crony capitalism intervenes to distort market forces. US big business, tech and crypto, is eating out of his hand and will jump however high he commands in 2026 until their legs fall off. Exxon is the exception, obviously a slow learner.

One to six could be enough to keep the wheels turning for a while yet.

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ANNIVERSARIES

Forms must be received 30 days prior to or no later than 30 days after the event.

BIRTHS

Forms must be submitted within 30 days of the baby's birth and must contain the signatures of both of the parents listed.

ENGAGEMENTS

Forms must be submitted no later than two weeks prior to the wedding date.

OBITUARIES

Information should be submitted as soon as possible. Obituaries received by 10 a.m. will appear in the next edition on Tuesday or Friday. Basic notices are provided by the Spencer Reporter as a free service to county residents and their immediate families.

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