

New York Assembly passes anti-human trafficking bills

Pieces of Women's Equality Act pushed rather than package

By Matthew Hamilton | March 16, 2015



Photo: PAUL BUCKOWSKI
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Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, at podium, members of the Assembly Majority, survivors of sex trafficking and advocates for the survivors take part in a press conference to discuss human trafficking legislation on Monday, March 16, 2015, at the Capitol in Albany, N.Y. (Paul Buckowski / Times Union)

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The logjam has been broken, though it doesn't seem like the entire Women's Equality Act will easily flow to the governor's desk.

The Assembly passed on Monday a package of anti-human-trafficking legislation, only one bill of which is poised to be signed by the governor. The Trafficking Victims Protection and Justice Act — a WEA plank that passed the state Senate in January — increases penalties for sex and labor human trafficking, requires anti-human-trafficking training for law enforcement and creates a civil right of action to enable victims of human trafficking to sue their perpetrators for damages, among other things. The rest of the package, which includes bills aimed at training

gaming facility employees to recognize the signs of human trafficking and creating a 24-hour hotline to report human trafficking, is made of new bills that face an uncertain fate in the GOP-controlled state Senate.

Monday's votes were symbolic of a larger narrative on women's bills this session. For the first time, the Assembly is willing to take up the Women's Equality Act piecemeal instead of passing an omnibus package. But [Democrats](#) will look to strengthen individual pieces by passing new bills instead of legislation already approved by the state Senate this year.

At a press conference announcing the human trafficking package, Speaker [Carl Heastie](#), a Democrat, said the Democratic majority's consensus is to move forward on individual pieces.

"I would say yes — to some degree," Heastie said of whether the rest of the WEA would move toward a vote. "We're going to go back to where the original sponsors were in the Assembly on where the legislation is. We will take up all the topics, but not necessarily the same bills on any of the topics."