



Trafficking Survivors Relief Act (TSRA) 2026

What You Should Know

A lot of folks have been asking what the new federal law actually does — and whether it might apply to them. This is a simple breakdown to help you understand your options.

WHAT IS THE TSRA?

The Trafficking Survivors Relief Act (TSRA) is a new federal law, signed on January 23, 2026.

It creates a way for survivors of human trafficking to clear certain federal criminal records if those charges happened because of their trafficking situation.

This is the first law like this at the federal level, a groundbreaking step made possible by many years of survivor advocacy.

WHO CAN USE IT?

You may be eligible if:

1. You have a federal charge or conviction (not state-level)
2. You are a survivor of human trafficking
3. The offense happened as a direct result of being trafficked

It can also apply if you are currently incarcerated or were in the past. Every situation is different, so it can really help to talk to a lawyer or advocate to figure out if your case qualifies.

WHAT KIND OF CHARGES CAN BE CLEARED?

A-Level Offenses (full relief)

You can ask the court to clear arrests and convictions if:

- (1) The offense was directly connected to your trafficking experience

B-Level Offenses (more limited)

These may qualify only if:

- (1) The offense was tied to trafficking and
- (2) It was reduced to an A-level offense and
- (3) That A-level charge was later dismissed

IMPORTANT TO KNOW

- Clearing your record does not erase fines or restitution
- You can still apply even if your case happened years ago; this law is retroactive
- You don't lose your chance if you didn't raise trafficking or duress in your original case

NEW PROTECTION IN THE LAW

The TSRA also creates a **duress defense** for federal cases.

That means if you're being charged now for something connected to trafficking, you can raise that as part of your defense.

Even if you did not raise that defense in your original case, you may still be able to come back and seek relief now.

HOW DO YOU APPLY?

- ↳ You (or your lawyer) file a written petition
- ↳ This goes to the federal court where your case happened
- ↳ In some cases, the government may ask for a hearing

WHERE TO START

If you think this might apply to you, a good first step is reaching out to:

- Your lawyer, if you have retained one
- A legal aid organization
- A public defender
- A trafficking survivor support organization

They can help you understand your options and next steps.

BOTTOM LINE

If you were charged with a federal offense because you were being trafficked, this law may give you a path to clear your record.