

# Snohomish Law Group Clarifies Legal Distinctions Between Human Smuggling and Human Trafficking

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*Understanding Key Differences That Can Reshape Criminal Defense Strategies*

EVERETT, WA, UNITED STATES, August 25, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Snohomish Law Group is shedding light on the legal differences between human smuggling and human trafficking, two

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*Snohomish Law Group*

offenses that are often misunderstood and misreported in the media. In a [recent blog post](#), the firm emphasized that while these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, the charges involve very different elements, penalties, and legal strategies.

The firm cautions that anyone under investigation for either offense must understand how the law draws a sharp line between smuggling and trafficking.

This distinction can determine the severity of charges, whether federal court is involved, and the type of defense needed.

## Understanding Human Smuggling

Human smuggling typically refers to assisting someone in crossing a border illegally in exchange for payment. It is considered a crime against national immigration laws, not against the individuals being transported. The people involved generally consent to the act, and once the border crossing is complete, the smuggler's role often ends.

This offense is commonly prosecuted in federal court and may involve additional charges related to conspiracy or immigration fraud.

## Understanding Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a crime of exploitation. It involves coercion, deception, or force used to compel someone into labour or commercial sex acts. Consent is irrelevant under the law, especially in cases involving minors. A person can be trafficked without ever crossing a border or even leaving their home city.

Trafficking charges carry heavy penalties, including long prison sentences and mandatory sex offender registration for certain offenses.

### Why the Distinction Matters

The key difference lies in consent and exploitation. Smuggling is often a one-time transport crime with willing participants. Trafficking, by contrast, is an ongoing abuse of power involving manipulation or force. Those charged with smuggling may be viewed as facilitators, while trafficking defendants face allegations of human rights violations.

Snohomish Law Group notes that trafficking laws are written to protect victims, while smuggling laws are aimed at deterring illegal entry. The penalties reflect this distinction.

### The Role of a Criminal Defense Lawyer

Attorney Scott Lawrence advises anyone accused of either crime to speak with legal counsel immediately. Prosecutors may attempt to escalate a smuggling charge into trafficking based on circumstantial evidence. A qualified defense lawyer can examine the facts of the case and help demonstrate whether the accused was involved in transportation for hire or coercive criminal conduct.

Understanding this difference is often the first step in building an appropriate legal defense and preventing unjust outcomes.

### About Snohomish Law Group

Snohomish Law Group, led by [criminal defense attorney Scott Lawrence](#), defends clients throughout Snohomish County and surrounding areas.

The firm handles a wide range of serious charges, including immigration-related crimes, human trafficking allegations, and felony offenses, with a focus on protecting clients' rights and presenting fact-driven legal strategies.

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