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## **Senator Bettencourt Files The Homeowner's Religious Freedom Act, SB 227**

*Legislation will protect religious speech and limit overzealous HOA's ability to remove religious displays*

**Austin** - Senator Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston) has filed Senate Bill 227, the Homeowners Religious Freedom Act. This legislation protects homeowners from overzealous Homeowner Association rules that would effectively ban religious displays. These problems especially reoccur every year around Hanukkah, Christmas, etc...

**"The HOA does not own your property and should not be in the business of placing overly burdensome restrictions on the free exercise of your religion,"** said Senator Bettencourt. **"Homeowners have the right to put a religious display on their own property and it is bad public policy that several overly restrictive HOAs have banned any religious displays by not allowing any materials to be displayed at all."**

### Key Provisions of the Homeowners Religious Freedom Act Include:

- Strikes the provisions limiting the right to religious displays to the front door, prohibiting the HOA from taking down any religious display on the property;
- Removes the provision allowing the HOA to effectively ban religious displays by having control of the allowable materials, or not allowing any at all; and
- Only allows the removal of displays that are patently offensive "for reasons other than its religious content."

In the previous legislative session, similar legislation, Senate Bill 1609, passed the Texas Senate by a unanimous vote but was never voted on by the full Texas House.

**"The bottom line is simply that if a homeowner wants to display a Nativity Scene, put a Cross or Menorah on their door, or exercise their religious freedom, whatever their religion might be, a homeowners association should not have the right to prevent that,"** concluded Senator Bettencourt.

Senator Bettencourt is the Chair of the Senate Select Committee of Property Tax Reform, the Chair of the Senate Select Committee on Government Reform, and serves on the Senate Finance, Education, and Higher Education committees. Additionally, he is also the Vice-Chair of the Intergovernmental Relations Committee. He also serves on the Joint Committee on Government Facilities and is an active member of the ongoing Texas Commission on Public School Finance, where he is the Chair of the Revenue Workgroup.

Senator Bettencourt plans to file additional legislation in the coming days on a wide range of issues.

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