



**State Senator
Kirk Watson
District 14**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Watson files bills to prevent sexual assault and empower survivors

Senator Kirk Watson on Friday filed six bills aimed at preventing sexual assault and empowering sexual assault survivors. These and other survivor-endorsed bills will be featured at a press conference led by sexual assault survivors and advocates scheduled for 9:15 am on Monday, February 4, in the Senate press room.

"Sexual assault survivors and their advocates have done a tremendous job raising awareness about this issue, particularly over the last two years," Sen. Watson said. "Their courage and hard work has given the Texas Legislature a unique opportunity to pass some much-needed reforms this session."

Sen. Watson's bills focus on improving our criminal justice and higher education practices relating to sexual assault.

SB 584 updates the Penal Code's definition of "consent" to clearly indicate that consent is lacking if a victim is too intoxicated to consent, if a victim withdraws consent and the actor persists, or if a caretaker exploits a client's dependency on him or her.

SB 585 creates a Texas IX, ensuring that even if the federal government weakens Title IX's protections relating to sexual assault and sexual harassment, every public and private institution of higher education in Texas will have strong protections. For example, SB 585 ensures every institution adopts a policy against sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, and stalking that guarantees a prompt and equitable investigation into all reported violations.

SB 586 improves the training Texas peace officers receive regarding sexual assault by ensuring it's up-to-date and trauma-informed.

SB 587 requires the Texas Department of Public Safety to expand their existing data collection efforts to help policymakers and the public better understand what happens to sexual assault cases at each phase of the criminal justice system.

SB 588 sets out more specific procedures to collect and test rape kits to ensure we're processing this valuable evidence quickly and efficiently.

SB 589 prohibits employers from requiring their employees to sign a confidentiality agreement regarding sexual assault or sexual harassment but allows survivors to use this settlement tool if they so choose.

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