



Joan Huffman
Senator ★ District 17

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 7, 2014

Contact: Austin Arceneaux ~ 281-980-3500

Austin.Arceneaux@senate.state.tx.us

Senator Huffman to Author Legislation Aimed at Preventing and Prosecuting Human Smuggling

HOUSTON— Following a press conference with Attorney General Greg Abbott at HPOU headquarters yesterday, State Senator Joan Huffman announced today that she will author an omnibus human smuggling bill for the 84th legislative session that will strengthen the penalties for those convicted of human smuggling. Additionally, the legislation she plans to file will update and expand the definition of human smuggling to match realities on the ground, and add a new offense for "continuous smuggling" in Texas law. After hearing from prosecutors both at border communities and within her district, it has become apparent that the current laws do not allow for effective prosecution. Therefore, she will join with Attorney General Greg Abbott who has called for these reforms.

"Next session, I plan to file comprehensive legislation on the first day of filing that will give prosecutors the powerful tools they need to convict those participating in the 'business' of human smuggling. As Vice-Chair of the Criminal Justice Committee, I will work closely with my colleagues and all of the appropriate stakeholders to develop legislation that I believe will be of significant help to law enforcement throughout the state as they work to combat this crime."

Because of our porous border, our state has been a hub for human smuggling for quite some time. Tens of thousands of individuals are smuggled into Texas each year, and nearly all of the smuggling organizations and individuals committing the crime, according to the Texas Department of Public Safety, "are connected either directly or indirectly to gangs and/or Mexican cartels."

Huffman also noted that "with the lack of progress being made on this issue in Washington, it is up to Texas lawmakers such as myself to address this issue, to better prosecute and deter human smuggling in Texas."

(Senator Joan Huffman represents District 17, which includes portions of Brazoria, Fort Bend and Harris counties. Huffman currently serves as chairwoman of the Texas Senate Republican Caucus, the co-chairwoman of the Joint Committee to Study Human Trafficking, and as vice chairwoman of the Senate Criminal Justice Committee. She also is a member of the Finance, State Affairs, and Health and Human Services Committees. Huffman and her family reside in Houston.)

###

Connect with us: Follow Senator Huffman on Twitter: @joanhuffman. Find her on Facebook: Senator Joan Huffman.