



Joan Huffman

Senator ★ District 17

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### **Senator Joan Huffman Files Bill to Reform Public Integrity Unit**

AUSTIN—Senator Joan Huffman, R-Houston, today filed legislation to address the longstanding issues surrounding the state-funded Public Integrity Unit, a division of the Travis County District Attorney's Office charged with investigating alleged public corruption, insurance fraud, and motor fuels tax fraud throughout Texas.

"The Public Integrity Unit needs to be reformed," said Huffman. "The time is right for these changes, which will restore public confidence in these critical processes."

S.B. 10 will completely change the structure of the Public Integrity Unit (PIU). Under the bill, the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) will assume the critical prosecutorial support functions of the PIU and will conduct an initial investigation into any offense named in the act and brought to their attention by a complaint.

"I support Senator Huffman for filing legislation that will place the Public Integrity Unit in a more appropriate setting," said Lt. Governor Dan Patrick. "Addressing this issue is the first step in winning back the public's trust and clearly a step in the right direction."

In order to ensure a thorough and impartial investigation, S.B. 10 also requires a Texas Ranger to assist the OAG in the initial investigation and verify any findings. If rising to the level of reasonable suspicion, those investigative findings are then forwarded to the administrative judge presiding over the region containing the public official's residence. S.B. 10 defines "residence" as a public official's home town. After receiving the initial investigation, the judge will then refer cases to a county or district attorney in the administrative region that is not from the accused's county of residence. Once in the hands of the prosecuting attorney, S.B. 10 grants those prosecutors discretion to terminate the referred case or continue with prosecution if there is sufficient evidence to do so. Should any referred case go to trial, the venue will be the public official's home town.

"The goal of this legislation is to remove the investigation and prosecution of persons accused of crimes against public administration from the purview of one locally elected county official," said Huffman. "These changes will inspire confidence in these critical functions of government and keep this process fair to all Texans, no matter where they live or to which political party they belong."

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*(Senator Joan Huffman represents District 17, which includes portions of Brazoria, Fort Bend and Harris counties. Huffman currently serves as Chairwoman of the Senate Committee on State Affairs, as Vice Chairwoman of the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice, and is a member of the Senate Committee on Finance and the Legislative Budget Board. Huffman and her family reside in Houston.)*

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