



Joan Huffman
Senator ★ District 17

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Senate Bill 20, by Senator Joan Huffman, Signed Into Law
*Anti-Human Trafficking Legislation will Aid Law Enforcement, Enhance
Prosecutorial Tools, and Support Survivors*

Austin— Today, Senate Bill 20, by Senator Joan Huffman (R - Houston), was signed in to law by Governor Greg Abbott. SB 20 was this session's omnibus anti-human trafficking bill.

"The Texas Legislature is doing its part to end human trafficking," Huffman said. "I worked closely with the Governor and Lt. Governor, my colleagues, law enforcement, survivor advocates, and other stakeholders to pass SB 20 to protect vulnerable Texans and punish traffickers. As the Senate's leader in the fight against human trafficking, I look forward to the positive impact SB 20 will have throughout the state as it is implemented."

Senate Bill 20 codifies recommendations from the Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force, creates additional state programs designed to support trafficking survivors under the Health and Safety Code, and creates enhanced investigative and prosecutorial tools to go after traffickers. For example, SB 20 increases penalties on those convicted of buying sex, with a first time conviction being a Class A misdemeanor, a second conviction being a state jail felony, and a fourth conviction being a reportable offense for purposes of the sex offender registration program. Previously, the first conviction was a Class B misdemeanor, a second conviction was a Class A misdemeanor, and a fourth conviction or more was a state jail felony, with no obligation to register as a sex offender.

Additionally, to combat human traffickers online, SB 20 creates two new offenses: Online Promotion of Prostitution and Aggravated Online Promotion of Prostitution. Online Promotion of Prostitution is a third-degree felony, or a second-degree felony if it involves a child under 18. Online Aggravated Promotion of Prostitution is a second-degree felony or a first-degree felony if it involves a child under 18. This allows Texas prosecutors to pursue online providers of prostitution and trafficked people such as Backpage.com and similar websites. Increasing penalties, creating new offenses, and including registration as a sex offender will deter buyers and provide assistance to law enforcement and prosecutors throughout the state.

"We must do everything we can to eliminate human trafficking in Texas and to protect the survivors of these horrific crimes" said Governor Greg Abbott. "I applaud Senator Huffman for her leadership in developing solutions that crack down on human trafficking, put dangerous criminals behind bars, and provide care and rehabilitation services for victims. Together, we will send a message that the ideals of freedom, justice, and human dignity will always prevail in the State of Texas."

Now signed into law, the bill will go into effect on September 1, 2019.

Senator Joan Huffman represents District 17, which includes portions of Brazoria, Fort Bend and Harris counties. Huffman currently serves as Chair of the Senate Committee on State Affairs, Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice, and as a member of the Senate Committee on Finance, the Senate Committee on Administration, and the Legislative Budget Board.

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