



Senator Joan Huffman

Senate District 17

Senator Joan Huffman Files Bail Reform Package

AUSTIN — Today, in response to Governor Greg Abbott naming bail reform as an emergency item, Senator Joan Huffman, R-Houston, announced her filing of a comprehensive bail reform package aimed at making our communities safer and bringing accountability and transparency to the bail setting process.

“I want to thank Governor Abbott for recognizing bail reform as an emergency item—because it truly is a public safety crisis that must be immediately addressed across our state,” said Senator Huffman. “I, along with millions of Texans, am fed up with violent, repeat offenders being released into our communities by judges that are more concerned about their own political agenda than the safety and security of law-abiding Texans. Thanks to the Governor’s addition of bail reform to the list of emergency items, I anticipate that the Texas Senate will advance these common-sense, public safety-focused reforms through the Senate as expeditiously as possible.”

Included in the package are:

Senate Bill 9, a priority item of Lt. Governor Dan Patrick, seeks to enact stringent measures to enhance judicial accountability and public safety by shifting the authority to set initial bonds for specific high-risk defendants, including those on parole, repeat felony offenders, and those charged with violent crimes or detained under immigration holds, from hearing officers to a Presiding Judge that is accountable to voters. The bill also expands the list of offenses ineligible for personal bond to include unlawful firearm possession, violation of family violence protective orders, terroristic threats, and murder related to fentanyl distribution. It increases transparency in charitable bail organizations’ reporting, prevents magistrates from altering district court-set bonds, mandates a judicial appearance before setting felony bonds, and provides a new appeal process for prosecutors to challenge insufficient bail.

Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 17, which if approved by the voters, would allow judges to deny bail to the most violent offenders who pose a clear and convincing threat to public safety. SJR 17 is similar to multiple iterations, which passed the Senate with bipartisan support in 2021 and 2023, including a vote of 30-1 in 2023.

Senate Joint Resolution 49, which if approved by the voters, would amend the state Constitution to mandate the denial of bail for an illegal alien accused of a felony upon probable cause. In order to assist the federal government in implementing the recently signed “Laken Riley Act”, this bill will establish a similar detention mechanism for illegal aliens accused of felony offenses in Texas.

Senate Bill 1047, which aims to enhance the Public Safety Report System (PSRS) used by judges setting bail by flagging defendants with protective orders and who are on probation, parole, or have outstanding warrants. It also ensures that reoffenders appear before the original judge for bond reassessment. Importantly, the bill improves victim notification in family violence cases to ensure their input in bail decisions that may impact their own safety.

Senate Bill 1048 would ban the use of taxpayer money by a political subdivision to fund nonprofit organizations that use public donations to pay bail bonds for defendants. Additionally, the bill allows taxpayers or residents to seek injunctive relief if this prohibition is violated. This practice by certain political subdivisions raises serious public safety concerns as it allows defendants to be released from jail using the same source of taxpayer dollars that were used to arrest and process the offender.

(Senator Joan Huffman represents District 17, which is comprised of Colorado, Jackson, Matagorda, and Wharton counties and portions of Brazoria, Fort Bend, Harris, and Waller counties. Huffman currently serves as Chair of the Senate Committee on Finance and as a senior member of the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice and the Legislative Budget Board.)