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LOIS W. KOLKHORST

STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 18

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**Senator Lois Kolkhorst Receives "Big Voice for Little Texans" award from Texas Court
Appointed Special Advocates (Texas CASA)**

The "Big Voice for Little Texans" award is reserved for legislators who have shown leadership in making children in the Child Protective Services (CPS) or foster care systems a priority. During the 84th legislative session, Senator Lois Kolkhorst wrote and passed Senate Bill 830 which created an independent ombudsman to protect children who suffer abuse or neglect while in a foster home, group home, or residential treatment facility. The need for this bill arose out of a survey by CASA of 40 students who exited the foster care system within the last 10 years.

"Senate Bill 830 empowers an ombudsman to investigate and review complaints related to violations of the department's duties and procedures. It also requires the ombudsman to develop policies to protect a child from retaliation for reporting violations," said Kolkhorst. "Often, children in these situations are reluctant to report abuse due to the mistrust of staff that place them in the home, the perception that nothing will be done, or the fear of retaliation from the very people charged with their care. This newly created independent ombudsman will provide a neutral source of protection for these vulnerable children."

Senator Kolkhorst has been an unwavering champion for CASA programs. Even in tough budget sessions, Senator Kolkhorst has always found a way to ensure that children in CPS are a priority. She truly understands the importance of having a well-trained and effective CASA volunteer for each child in CPS custody and the value that CASA brings to the foster care system.

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