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Texas Senate Approves Senate Bill 6, the Texas Privacy Act

AUSTIN - In a bipartisan vote, the Texas Senate approved final passage of the Texas Privacy Act, authored by Senator Lois Kolkhorst.

The Texas Privacy Act will designate that showers, dressing rooms and restrooms are separate for males and females in all schools, colleges, universities and government facilities. The act also allows private businesses and leased public venues in Texas to set their own policies without government interference.

"The Texas Privacy Act was written not to begin a controversy, but to end one," said Senator Kolkhorst. "This legislation is a thoughtful solution to a sensitive issue and preserves an expected level of privacy and safety and dignity. At the same time, it allows for personal accommodations for those requesting an alternate setting. In the spirit of free-enterprise, the Texas Privacy Act allows businesses and leased public facilities to let market forces and their own customers decide their own policies."

On May 13, 2016, then-President Obama issued an edict to all Texas schools, requiring that they provide access to showers, restrooms and dressing rooms based on "an individual's internal sense of gender." Schools were told that if they refused, they may lose federal funding. The idea of boys and girls being allowed to shower together or share a restroom resulted in public outcry, with schools being threatened with lawsuits, and local policies pitting parents against school boards.

Earlier this year, the new federal administration rescinded Obama's controversial order, stating that the issue should be left for states to decide. The statewide debate over the issue now heads to the Texas House of Representatives for consideration.

"Though the debate on this legislation has been long and heated, it is important to remember that it is supported by an overwhelming majority of Texans including both Democrats and Republicans, Hispanics, African-Americans, Anglos, men and women," said Lt. Governor Dan Patrick. "I congratulate Senator Kolkhorst on the passage of SB 6 and thank her for both her leadership on this issue and her commitment to protecting the safety and privacy of Texans." ###