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CAPITOL OFFICE:
GE.4 • P.O. Box 12068
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711
(512) 463-0118

LOIS W. KOLKHORST

STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 18

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: 512-463-0118

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Senator Kolkhorst Passes Priority Legislation to Fully Fund State Parks and Historic Sites

AUSTIN – With a unanimous and bipartisan vote in the Texas Senate, Senator Lois W. Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) has passed Senate Joint Resolution 24 and Senate Bill 26 to offer a significant funding increase for state and local parks as well as historic sites across Texas. The legislation now moves to the Texas House where State Representative John Cryier (R-Lockhart) will serve as the House sponsor. If approved by voters, the constitutional amendment will see that existing funds already collected under the sporting goods sales tax are used entirely to fund the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas Historical Commission.

"As our population grows, Texas must promote and protect our public parks and state historic sites. We can all agree that these special places are vital to our economy and to our heritage, culture, and way of life," said Senator Kolkhorst. "Supporting our state parks and historic sites is an investment in our future and provides a gateway to the outdoors for every Texan. This legislation passed with bipartisan support because it is about delivering more maintenance and improvements to these sites, which in turn adds capacity for more visitors. People should not have to wait for days or weeks to gain entrance to these locations which are true Texas treasures."

For many years, Texas state parks were funded primarily through a one-penny-per-pack tax on cigarettes. In 1993, the 73rd Legislature replaced the cigarette tax funding with a portion of revenues derived from the sales tax on sporting goods. The sporting goods sales tax was designed to create a steady stream of funding for our state parks, but the amount of the tax has fluctuated over the years. Under SJR 24 and SB 26, the entire amount of already existing state sales tax on sporting goods will be permanently dedicated to parks and historic sites.

"I commend Senator Kolkhorst for the passage of Senate Bill 26 which ensures that the state honors our commitment to provide 100 percent of sales tax revenue from the sale of sporting goods to our state parks and historical sites," said Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick. "SB 26 will help make sure our state parks are safely maintained so all Texans can continue to enjoy them. Our parks and historical sites are a key component of Texas' heritage and must be preserved for future generations and I commend the senate for re-affirming this commitment." ###