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THE SENATE OF TEXAS



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LOIS W. KOLKHORST

STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 18

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Senator Kolkhorst Re-Appointed Senate Health and Human Services Committee Chair; Files COVID-19 Legislation

AUSTIN - As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to afflict the nation, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick has once again entrusted Senator Lois W. Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) as Chair of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services. In naming Senate Committee appointments for the 87th Legislative Session, Lieutenant Governor Patrick also named Kolkhorst a member of the Senate Committees on Finance, Natural Resources & Economic Development, Transportation, Water, Agriculture & Rural Affairs as well as the Select Committee on Texas Ports.

"I'm grateful to the Lieutenant Governor for giving me the opportunity to serve as Chair of the Senate's Health & Human Services Committee and to continue finding solutions that protect public health and build a healthier Texas," Kolkhorst stated. "We must work together to strike a balance between our public health priorities, civil liberties, and economic freedoms."

The Senate Committee on Health and Human Services is one of the most influential Senate committees, managing nearly \$80 billion of healthcare spending in the state budget. The committee is also responsible for setting public health policy for the state, regulating physicians and other healthcare professionals, providing legislative oversight to state agencies and boards including the Health & Human Services Commission, Department of Family & Protective Services and the Texas Medical Board, among many other health-related licensing agencies. In addition, Kolkhorst serves on the Expert Vaccine Allocation Panel that is tasked with efficiently distributing the COVID-19 vaccine across the state. As the first state in the nation to administer over one million vaccines, the Texas distribution effort has been lauded as a national model.

With a major uptick in domestic violence caused in part by COVID-19 restrictions, Kolkhorst said she is aiming to increase safety for domestic abuse survivors. She has filed SB 343 requiring Conditions of Bond be incorporated into a database that is easily accessible by law enforcement, allowing them to quickly determine if a domestic violence offender is violating a judge-ordered

mandate. Currently, law enforcement officers are unable to access – and therefore unable to enforce – Conditions of Bond information for family violence offenders.

"Domestic violence has spiked during COVID-19 and that's why we need more tools to protect victims," said Kolkhorst. "I am proud to work with the Texas Council on Family Violence to pass this important legislation that will protect countless victims from future violence and prevent avoidable tragedies."

Another challenge during the pandemic has been how to deliver quality public education, with school districts shifting much of their class instruction online. Under current law, Texas parents have access to the teaching and instructional materials of their child in the classroom, but access to online curriculum has been inconsistent. To clarify parental rights, Kolkhorst has filed SB 348 to ensure parents have the right to observe any and all virtual instruction and review any online teaching materials presented to their child.

"As a longtime supporter of transparency, no parent should be left in the dark about what their child is learning online," said Kolkhorst. "I have long believed that parental involvement in a child's education is crucial to the success of the student and SB 348 will guarantee just that." ###