



News Release

Joan Huffman

State Senator ★ District 17



Capitol Office
P.O. Box 12068
Room GE.5
Austin, TX 78711
512-463-0117
512-463-0639 (Fax)

Lake Jackson District Office
129 Circle Way
Suite 101
Lake Jackson, TX 77566
979-480-0994
979-480-9122 (Fax)

Houston District Office
6217 Edloe
Houston, TX 77005
713-662-3821
713-682-3842 (Fax)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Dec. 11, 2012

Contact: Jeff Hillery, Communications Director
512-463-0117 ~ jeff.hillery@senate.state.tx.us

SENATOR HUFFMAN FILES BILL TO ADMIT EVIDENCE OF SIMILAR OFFENSES IN SEXUAL ABUSE CASES INVOLVING CHILDREN

AUSTIN—Today, State Senator Joan Huffman, R-Southside Place, filed legislation to bring Texas closer in line with federal rules by allowing evidence of prior similar offenses to be admitted in cases of sexual assault and sexual abuse of children.

“Sexual assault cases are often difficult to prosecute and may not have any relevant evidence other than the testimony of the alleged victim,” said Sen. Huffman, who is a former prosecutor and judge. “When the testimony of a young child is all the evidence the State can present against the word of an adult, juries often find it difficult to determine guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. Yet if there have been outcries by other children against the same defendant, their testimony can be relevant and have crucially important value.”

Senate Bill 12 is designed to provide greater resources to prosecutors and victims of sexual assault. Under current Texas law, a defendant’s criminal sexual record is admissible as evidence only in cases where a child was previously victimized by the same person. Huffman’s bill is modeled after Federal Rule of Evidence (FRE) 413, which specifically allows for the admission of other similar offenses in sexual assault cases. So far, eleven states have enacted similar legislation.

Huffman, who is vice chairwoman of the Senate Criminal Justice Committee, noted that her bill provides greater protection to children who are victims of such crimes as sexual assault, human trafficking and pornography. SB 12 requires that defendants are given at least 30 days' notice of the State's intent to bring up a prior sexual offense. Ultimately, a judge would determine whether such criminal history is relevant.

"I will always strive to be an effective voice for victims, but I also remain committed to being a guardian for the integrity of criminal justice proceedings," Huffman said. "I wrote this legislation to serve the public's interest in prosecuting those accused of committing the most heinous crimes against some of our most vulnerable citizens--our children--while still protecting the constitutional rights of defendants."

Senator Joan Huffman represents District 17, which comprises all or part of 34 cities and 29 school districts in Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris and Jefferson counties. Huffman currently serves as vice chairwoman of the Criminal Justice Committee. She is also a member of the State Affairs, Jurisprudence, Higher Education, and Health and Human Services Committees, as well as the Sunset Advisory Commission. Huffman and her family reside in Southside Place.

#

Connect with us: Follow us on Twitter @JoanHuffman. Find us on Facebook at SenatorJoanHuffman.