



Joan Huffman
Senator ★ District 17

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Senator Huffman Files SB 18 to Protect Constitutional Free Speech on College Campuses

Austin— Today, Senator Joan Huffman (R - Houston) filed Senate Bill 18 to protect constitutional free speech on public college campuses in Texas. During the interim, the Senate Committee on State Affairs was tasked with analyzing existing campus policies and practices and to make recommendations to protect First Amendment rights and enhance the free speech environment on campus.

"Colleges and universities should provide the opportunity for students to hear others' points of view in a free and unrestrained manner," said Senator Huffman. "Senate Bill 18 is a direct result of the Committee's process of hearings and research toward that goal. This bill was constructed in an objective, non-partisan manner and will be applied equally to all groups and points of view."

Senate Bill 18 affirms that it is the policy of the State of Texas to protect the expressive constitutional rights of individuals by recognizing freedom of speech and assembly as central to the mission of institutions of higher education. Senate Bill 18 also requires that public institutions must ensure that common outdoor areas are deemed to be traditional public forums and permit any individual to engage in expressive activities in those areas freely. Additionally, SB 18 requires public institutions to adopt a policy detailing students' rights and responsibilities regarding expressive activities.

"Campus leadership should never stymie free speech at an institution of higher education simply because of a disagreement in ideology or politics," said Huffman. "Under Senate Bill 18, institutions may not take action against a student organization on the basis of a political, religious, philosophical, ideological, or academic viewpoint, thereby allowing students and faculty to thrive in a setting that respects their First Amendment right to free speech."

(Senator Joan Huffman represents District 17, which includes portions of Brazoria, Fort Bend and Harris counties. Huffman currently serves as Chair of the Senate Committee on State Affairs, Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice, as a member of the Senate Committee on Finance and the Senate Committee on Administration, and as a member of the Legislative Budget Board. Huffman and her family reside in Houston.)

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