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LOIS W. KOLKHORST

STATE SENATOR
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**SENATOR KOLKHORST FILES LEGISLATION TO FULLY FUND
STATE PARKS AND HISTORIC SITES**

AUSTIN – Senator Lois W. Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) has filed Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 24 to secure funding for the 95 state parks and historic sites operated by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and 22 historic sites operated by the Texas Historical Commission. The legislation would constitutionally dedicate funds already collected under the sporting goods sales tax.

"As our state population grows, we 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 Texas heritage, culture, and way of life," said Senator Kolkhorst. "A reliable source of funding for state parks and historic sites is an investment in our future and a gateway to the outdoors for every Texan. This funding will allow maintenance, repairs and improvements to happen on a regular basis. Texans should not have to wait for days, weeks or months 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. Prior to 2015, only 40 percent of the dedicated sporting good sales tax was appropriated to the park system. However in 2015, the legislature appropriated 100 percent of the tax dollars available and in 2017, the legislature appropriated nearly 90 percent.

"Our parks play a vital role in providing outdoor experiences to an increasingly urban state," said Joseph Fitzsimons, former chair of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission. "We need to meet the current and future demands of our growing state with a consistent and reliable stream of funding for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. A constitutional dedication of the sporting goods sales tax will achieve that."

Filing SJR 24 with one dozen bipartisan joint authors, Kolkhorst said that she was proud to join a diverse group of lawmakers and organizations in supporting this legislation so every Texan has access to what the outdoors has to offer. "I look forward to working with Representative John Cyrier (R-Lockhart) who will be handling the legislation in the House of Representatives."

State parks and historic sites in Kolkhorst's senate district include: Goose Island State Park, Lake Somerville-Birch Creek State Park, Lake Somerville-Nails Creek State Park, Stephen F. Austin State Park, Mustang Island State Park, Palmetto State Park, Goliad State Park and Historical Site, Monument Hill-Kreische Brewery State Historic Site, Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site, San Felipe De Austin State Historic Site, Fulton Mansion State Historic Site and Fannin Battle Ground State Historic Site.

An SJR takes a two-thirds vote by each chamber of the Legislature. If the votes are secured, the measure ultimately goes to the people as a ballot measure on the next general election to amend the State Constitution. ###