



## The Senate of Texas

**CÉSAR J. BLANCO**

TEXAS SENATOR  
DISTRICT 29

**PRESS RELEASE**  
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# SENATE PASSES LANDMARK MILITARY SEXUAL ASSAULT LEGISLATION BY SENATOR CÉSAR BLANCO

**Austin, Texas** - Today, the Texas Senate unanimously passed Senate Bill 623 by Senator César J. Blanco. Senate Bill 623 aims to protect Texas soldiers from military sexual assault and provide avenues of justice and resources for victims.

Victims of military sexual assault often do not report their assaults due to fear of social and professional retaliation, concerns of confidentiality breaches, and a lack of confidence in the military justice system.

Last year, the tragic circumstances surrounding Private First Class Vanessa Guillen's disappearance and untimely death, shed light on how the system fails to protect our heroes. On her own base, a place she should have felt safest, PFC Guillen lived in fear. It was reported that she shared with family and friends that she was assaulted on base, but she was too scared to report it. Vanessa Guillen's story exemplifies the unacceptable pervasiveness of sexual assault in the military. But she isn't alone.

While the Texas Legislature has no jurisdiction over the U.S. military, Texas has the largest state military force in the country with close to 24,000 members in the Texas Military Forces.

### **Senator Blanco issued the following statement:**

"While no bill can bring back Vanessa Guillen or undo the countless sexual assaults our service members have suffered on duty, this bill takes a leap forward in protecting our service members and ensuring victims of military sexual assault receive justice.

"No victim should ever be afraid of reporting their sexual assaults in the military. This bill will help victims come forward by allowing reports and criminal investigations outside the chain of command.

"With Senate Bill 623, Texas will lead by example in protecting our Texas soldiers from sexual assault. I appreciate all the survivors who have shared their personal stories with me and helped craft this landmark bill."

### **Attorney Natalie Khawam, Representative for the Family of Vanessa Guillén**

"My client, the Guillén family, and I support Senator Blanco and all his efforts to protect our service members through SB 623. We hope this legislation will be passed swiftly so our service members and their families have the protections and support they need, especially while serving and protecting the great people of Texas."

## **En Español**

### **El Senador Blanco emitió el siguiente comunicado:**

"Si bien ningún proyecto de ley puede devolverle la vida a Vanessa Guillén o deshacer las innumerables agresiones sexuales que nuestros soldados han sufrido durante su servicio, este proyecto de ley da un paso adelante para protegerlos y garantizar que las víctimas de agresiones sexuales militares reciban justicia.

"Ninguna víctima debería tener miedo de denunciar las agresiones sexuales que ha vivido en el ejército. Este proyecto de ley ayudará a las víctimas a denunciar por medio de informes e investigaciones criminales fuera de la cadena de mando.

"Con el Proyecto de Ley del Senado 623, Texas liderará con el ejemplo en la protección de nuestros soldados de Texas de la agresión sexual. Agradezco a todos los sobrevivientes que han compartido sus experiencias personales conmigo y ayudaron a elaborar este histórico proyecto de ley."

### **Abogada Natalie Khawam, Representante de la Familia de Vanessa Guillén**

"Mis clientes, la familia Guillén, y yo apoyamos al Senador Blanco y todos sus esfuerzos para proteger a nuestros miembros del servicio militar a través de SB 623. Esperamos que esta legislación se apruebe rápidamente para que nuestros miembros del servicio militar y sus familias tengan la protección y el apoyo que necesitan, especialmente mientras sirven y protegen a la gente de Texas."