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Schwertner Files Statewide Ridesharing Bill

Citing free market and public safety concerns, Senator Schwertner files Senate Bill 176 to bring fair and consistent regulation to ridesharing companies like Uber and Lyft

AUSTIN, TX -- This morning, Senator Charles Schwertner, MD (R-Georgetown) filed SB 176, a bill to establish fair, predictable, and consistent statewide regulation of transportation networking companies like Uber and Lyft. Today marks the first day to file legislation for consideration during the 85th Legislative Session, which begins January 10.

"Ridesharing services represent an innovative mobility solution and a valuable source of employment for countless Texans," said Schwertner. "By eliminating the patchwork of inconsistent and anti-competitive regulations that exist in cities across the state, Senate Bill 176 will give the free market a chance to work and guarantee that ridesharing companies in Texas have a clear and consistent regulatory framework under which to operate."

Senator Schwertner first called for a statewide ridesharing solution in May after the Austin City Council agreed to impose new regulations pushed by local taxi companies to restrict competition from transportation networking companies like Uber and Lyft. Both companies have since withdrawn from the city of Austin. Related efforts to eliminate or otherwise restrict competition from ridesharing companies has led to similar conflicts in cities like Houston, Midland, San Antonio, and Corpus Christi.

"Trying to regulate these ridesharing services at the city level will always be challenging because people don't confine their mobility to just one city," continued Schwertner. "Transportation is, by its very nature, a regional concern and decisions made in one city have an undeniable impact on the surrounding communities. Senate Bill 176 will guarantee that all Texans have the freedom to move from city to city safely and dependably."

Transportation networking companies have also shown great potential to reduce drunk driving in cities where they've been allowed to operate. As a result, ridesharing has earned the enthusiastic support of national organizations like Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MAAD), as well as local law enforcement officials like Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo and Travis County Sheriff Greg Hamilton.

"The fact is, drunk drivers don't stop at city limit signs," continued Schwertner. "When someone drives drunk through my community on their way home from Austin, they're putting the lives of my children and my constituents' children at risk. Ridesharing has shown the potential to be one of the most effective tools in the fight against drunk driving and, to me, it simply defies common sense that anyone would want to make it harder, rather than easier, for people to get home safely."

(over)



If passed, SB 176 will see Texas join 34 other states that have already successfully addressed the regulation of ridesharing at the statewide level. SB 176 will:

- require national background checks for all ridesharing drivers
- require all ridesharing companies in Texas to obtain a statewide operating permit
- require the adoption of a zero-tolerance drug and alcohol policy for all drivers
- prohibit discrimination and ensure wheelchair-accessible rides may be requested
- give ridesharing passengers the ability to utilize a single transportation networking company across city lines
- provide entrepreneurs and established ridesharing companies with a consistent regulatory environment in which to grow their business

"I'm committed to seeing that all legitimate safety concerns regarding ridesharing are addressed, and I welcome all parties to engage productively in that discussion," continued Schwertner. "But as a state with a long tradition of supporting the free market, Texas should not allow the creation of new barriers to entry for the sole purpose of stifling innovation and eliminating competition."

A medical doctor by training, Dr. Schwertner currently serves as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services. Schwertner is currently serving his second term as the senator for Senate District 5, a ten-county region of central and east Texas.

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