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Senator Kolkhorst Introduces Legislative Package to Protect Private Property Rights

AUSTIN - Senator Lois W. Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) has introduced a new legislative package to give landowners new tools and safeguards to protect their land from eminent domain abuse.

"All of our freedoms flow from the ability to own and protect private property. That's why Texans have always sought to have strong private property rights," said Senator Kolkhorst. "I am proud to work with the Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers, Texas Farm Bureau, Texas Wildlife Association and many others in authoring Senate Bills 740, 741 and 742."

Texas has thousands of condemning authorities with the power of eminent domain. Many of these entities are private companies who can enter and take private land with little oversight and protection.

"We are grateful to have an ally like Sen. Kolkhorst who is committed to defending the rights of private landowners," said Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association President Richard Thorpe. "Property owners continue to be at a huge disadvantage when navigating the condemnation process and these proposed reforms are a great step toward preserving our heritage of land ownership in Texas."

This legislative package by Senator Kolkhorst will reform the process by which eminent domain is applied to landowners. Her proposal guarantees that landowners will be given access to all needed information about the attempt to condemn their land, and receive the information before any legal process against the landowner can proceed.

"We are proposing reasonable changes that many states across the nation already have in law. Texas should be a leader in strong and fair private property rights that allow for continued growth and economic prosperity," Texas Farm Bureau President Russell Boening said. "We aim to build fairness and integrity into the condemnation process to ensure landowners receive fair and just compensation."

The Kolkhorst proposal also seeks to ensure that the initial offers made to landowners are fair, and to see that anyone attempting to condemn private land must treat the landowner's property with respect from the very beginning of the process.

“Texas Wildlife Association recognizes the need for infrastructure to support our population and economy, but we believe there is room for rural landowners to be treated more fairly along the way. These landowners provide enormous benefit to our state by stewarding the open spaces of Texas, and they deserve equitable treatment during condemnation of their private property. As a hunter, angler and rural Texan, Senator Kolkhorst understands the many challenges facing landowners. Texas Wildlife Association could not be more appreciative of her leadership on this critical issue,” stated David Yeates, CEO.

Led by Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, Texas Farm Bureau and the Texas Wildlife Association, the newly formed Texans for Property Rights Coalition consists of over twenty organizations committed to the preservation of Texas’ private property rights. The coalition was organized to pursue eminent domain reform during the 2017 Texas legislative session, and will continue to work with legislators to secure the passage of these bills and others proposed in the senate that address the need for reform.

The coalition members include: Texas Farm Bureau, Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, Texas Wildlife Association, South Texas’ Property Rights Association, Texas Forestry Association, Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers Association, Texas Poultry Federation, Independent Cattlemen’s Association of Texas, Texas Grain Sorghum Association, Plains Cotton Growers Inc., Texas Land and Mineral Owners Association, Texas Association of Dairymen, Texas Cattle Feeders Association, Corn Producers Association of Texas, Riverside and Landowners Protection Coalition, Texas Grain and Feed Association, Texas Citrus Mutual, Texas Hill Country Heritage Association, Texas Coalition for Conservation, Texas Wheat Producers Association, Texas Agricultural Land Trust, Ranchers and Landowners Association of Texas. ###