



RYAN GUILLEN

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TEXAS STATE REPRESENTATIVE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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GUILLEN EMPHASIZES NEED FOR JUSTICE SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS AHEAD OF COMMITTEE MEETING

Appropriations Subcommittee To Discuss Juvenile Justice And Sexual Assault Kit Backlog

AUSTIN - Ahead of the meeting of the Appropriations subcommittee on Articles I, IV, and V next week, Representative Ryan Guillen (D - Rural South Texas) urges the committee to decrease the sexual assault kit back log and improve the juvenile justice system.

"It is imperative that we do everything we can to improve our justice system," remarked Guillen. "Juvenile justice programs are vital to keeping troubled youth out of the prison system, and the sexual assault kit backlog is unacceptable."

A rape kit—also known as a sexual assault kit—is a package of items used by medical personnel for gathering and preserving physical evidence following an allegation of sexual assault. The evidence collected from the victim can aid the criminal rape investigation and the prosecution of a suspected assailant. DNA evidence can have tremendous utility for sexual assault investigations and prosecution by identifying offenders, revealing serial offenders through DNA matches across cases, and exonerating those who have been wrongly accused. However, due to both the issue of rape kits not being submitted to crime labs for testing and the related issue of crime labs not having enough resources to test all of the submitted kits, there is now a nationwide backlog in the processing of rape kits.

The State of Texas was the first state to enact comprehensive laws that covered all 6 pillars of rape kit reform, including laws requiring an audit, testing of backlogged kits, testing of newly collected kits, tracking of kits, victims' right to notice provisions, and funding for rape kit reform. Guillen was an author of this necessary legislation. During the past legislative session, Rep. Guillen also helped secure the \$4,219,000 in initial funding to test the backlogged kits. In 2011 there were 18,946 untested kits in Texas and now only around 2,100 untested kits remain.

Additionally, the subcommittee will discuss issues of juvenile justice, an issue Guillen feels strongly about. The Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) has faced scrutiny recently, and Guillen feels that many improvements need to be made so that youths receive the treatment and reform they need so that they change their behavior and avoid further harsh punishments later in life.

"It is necessary that we have a successful juvenile justice system here in South Texas so that we can help troubled youth reform and live productive lives."

Serving ten rural South Texas counties in the Texas House of Representatives, Ryan Guillen is known for his hard work, fierce independence, and relentless efforts for South Texas families. Recently, Capitol Inside called him a "House Bill Machine," and a "one-person assembly line for



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legislation.” Since elected, few other legislators have passed more bills than Guillen. Sign up for updates at ryanguillen.com, facebook.com/representative.guillen, and twitter.com/ryanguillen

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