



Texas Anti-TSA Groping Bill Halted in House; Alive in Senate

Last month the anti-groping bill was unanimously passed by the Texas House, and it appeared likely that the Senate would pass it as well. But then the feds intervened and threatened to shut down all Texas air traffic if the bill were passed. Ten state Senators withdrew their support, and the bill died in the regular legislative session.

However, when Governor Rick Perry called a special session for other matters, Texans outraged by the TSA's invasive searches unleashed intense and relentless pressure to convince the Governor to call the bill into the special session. The Governor finally yielded on Monday, June 20, and the bill — [HB 41 in the House and SB 29 in the Senate](#) — [was back on track for consideration](#).

But four days later, on Friday, the Texas House adjourned without hearing the bill — after House Speaker Joe Straus "reversed his neutral position at the last minute to pull the plug on the bill," the [Texas Tribune](#) reported. The *Tribune* also observed that Straus showed "a degree of public adamance not seen much this session" and "said the bill will never be considered on the House floor 'as written.'" Straus' public reversal occurred despite the fact that the anti-TSA groping bill is very popular in Texas and gained national notice as well. Yet not everyone was surprised. John Birch Society National Development Officer Bill Cherry, who hails from Texas, warned on June 20 that the bill's supporters should watch for a request for language changes that might derail the bill. He explained, "It would be typical of those who don't want the bill to pass to require wording changes at the last minute — when it's too late — and then the bill won't pass." As it turned out, Straus went to Simpson asking him to change the bill's language, but Simpson did not agree. "The first thing I was asked to do was remove a section that refers to private parts," the *Texas Tribune* [quoted Simpson saying](#).

Speaker Straus does not take the bill seriously, insisting that it "appears to me to be nothing more than an ill-advised publicity stunt." Rep. Simpson, the bill's author, responded, "I'm curious whether the Speaker thinks that the Bill of Rights is a publicity stunt? Did the framers of the Constitution of the State of Texas and the [Constitution of the United States](#) write in protections against unreasonable search and seizure in order to be cute?"

Simpson's office issued a strongly worded press release late Friday, stating:

In a stunning turn of events, Speaker Joe Straus today went back on a fundamental campaign promise during the Speaker's race to allow the will of the House to work itself out on the floor. Instead of allowing HB 41, a bill to stop the federal government from groping innocent travelers without probable cause that had previously passed the House unanimously on both second and



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on June 25, 2011

third reading, to come up for a vote, Straus interjected his own will into the process. The Speaker unilaterally halted a bill supported by a majority of Texans, coauthored by 111 members of the House, approved by a majority of the Senate, vetted by Attorney General Greg Abbott, requested by Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst, and called by Governor Rick Perry.

Speaker Straus stated in his inaugural address: "The will of the House should guide this House. And the will of the House does not begin in the Speaker's office.... It begins with the 25 million people who are proud to call themselves Texans." But he didn't give the will of the people or the House an opportunity today. Instead he acted alone and enforced his own will upon the process, bringing to a halt the efforts of over one hundred coauthors and many thousands of individual Texans who have called, emailed, faxed, and rallied in support of this bill.

Apparently the Speaker thinks his wisdom above that of 111 coauthors and even the entirety of the House, which previously voted unanimously to pass this bill. Given the duplicity of Straus' position and the sudden break from his traditionally neutral stance on the Speaker's dais, it appears that the Speaker is staging his own publicity stunt.

Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst issued a statement Friday afternoon that the Senate will try to pass its version of the bill, SB 29, out of committee on Monday. The Texas Legislature's special session ends on Wednesday. Concerned Texans all across the state are rallying their fellow citizens to call once again and put pressure on the offices of Governor Rick Perry (512/463-2000), Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst (512/463-0001), and Speaker Joe Straus (512/463-1000) to pass the bill.

Analysts believe that, in light of a possible presidential run by Governor Perry, it would certainly be a feather in his cap to stand up for his state, and against Washington's bully tactic, on behalf of the anti-TSA groping bill.

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