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**FACT SHEET 2013**  
**S.B. 89**

## **Investigate Wrongful Convictions and Keep the Innocent Free**

### **THE TEXAS INNOCENCE COMMISSION WILL INVESTIGATE EXONERATIONS TO PREVENT FUTURE WRONGFUL CONVICTIONS**

Far too many Texans have been imprisoned for crimes they did not commit. The conviction of the innocent ruins lives, destroys public trust in our justice system, harms public safety as guilty culprits remain free, and denies victims justice.

Texas should establish an independent commission of experts to investigate the contributors to wrongful convictions and propose meaningful reforms that will prevent these injustices in the future. If Texas fails to implement serious reforms to address the failures in our justice system, many more innocent people will suffer behind bars.

#### **KEY FINDINGS**

- **Since 1989, Texas has exonerated 10 death row inmates and 45 inmates serving life sentences.<sup>1</sup>** Many more inmates serving lengthy sentences have also been exonerated. **Together, these innocent Texas inmates have served well over 1,000 years in prison for crimes they did not commit.<sup>2</sup>** These failures of our justice system ruin the lives of innocent inmates, destroy public trust, keep people with serious and violent offenses on the street, and deny justice to victims.
- **Texas is falling further behind other states in preventing wrongful convictions.** California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin have already established innocence commissions to prevent future wrongful convictions.<sup>3</sup>

#### **COST-SAVING AND PUBLIC SAFETY-DRIVEN SOLUTION: SUPPORT S.B. 89 BY SENATOR ELLIS**

- **S.B. 89 creates a formal Texas Innocence Commission to investigate post-conviction exonerations.** This nine-member body will work to identify common errors and defects in our criminal justice procedures that lead to wrongful convictions, as well as identify potential procedures and programs to address those issues.

The commission will also produce publicly available annual reports that record the identified weaknesses in our criminal justice process, as well as the commission's proposed solutions. Specifically, the commission will make recommendations to the legislature regarding the prevention of wrongful convictions or executions.

#### **Citations**

<sup>1</sup> The National Registry of Exonerations. <http://www.law.umich.edu/special/exoneration/Pages/about.aspx>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> KXAN News, "New bills focus on wrongful convictions," December 3, 2012.