The Phyllis Schlafly Report

Governors Harbor Fugitive Texas Legislators

By John and Andy Schlafly

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The exodus of more than 50 Democrat members of the Texas House to block a quorum in Austin is bad enough. Even worse is how the Democrat Governor of Illinois, JB Pritzker, has promised them safe harbor, appearing with them at a press conference on Tuesday while declaring "we'll do everything we can to support" them as they violate Texas law.

Control of the U.S. House for the second half of the Trump Administration hangs in the balance, as the redistricting map to be voted on in Austin would give Republicans a good chance of winning 5 of the 13 Texas congressional seats now held by Democrats. Illinois already gerrymandered its House maps to help Democrats win 14 out of its 17 seats, so it is hypocritical for them to allege unfairness in Texas doing what Illinois did.

Perhaps Illinois was chosen because its Democrat governor owns the Chicago Hyatt hotel, which has offered rooms to these Texas Democrats while they violate Texas law. At a press conference near Chicago on Tuesday, Pritzker denied that he was writing them checks – yet.

Trump observed on Tuesday morning that "I got the highest vote in the history of Texas. And we are entitled to five more seats" in Congress from Texas.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott stated on Monday, "Any Democrat who 'solicits, accepts or agrees to accept' … funds to assist in the violation of legislative duties or for purposes of skipping a vote may have violated bribery laws." Abbott added that any person who "offers, confers or agrees to confer" money to the Democrats who left could also be charged with a crime.

In 2021, Democrat House members likewise fled Austin to frustrate a quorum, in order to block passage of new voting integrity measures including voter ID. That blockade lasted through the first and into the second special session, when three Houston Democrats returned while giving the pandemic as their reason, a quorum was established, and the bill passed. A court struck it down, but on Monday the appeals court ruled that it easily complies with federal law.

In the Texas House a quorum requires the presence of two-thirds, or 100, of the 150 representatives. The legislative session on Monday fell eight votes short of a quorum.

Civil arrest warrants were then ordered under Texas law because of the dereliction of duty by Democrats, but these warrants are enforceable only in Texas. The governors of states where they can be located could approve an extradition request, but they all fled to states having Democrat governors vowing to protect them against extradition.

Democrat Texas Rep. Trey Martinez Fischer said, “We recognized when we got on the plane that we’re in this for the long haul.” Fellow Texas Democrat Rep. Gene Wu observed that he and his colleagues “will do whatever it takes.”

Congressional Democrats have encouraged this defiance of the Texas law requiring its legislators to be in Austin. Ironically, Texas has an enormous congressional delegation of 38 seats because Democrats insist on including illegal aliens in the census used to allocate seats among the states, and multiple Democrat congressmen from Texas will lose their seats next year under this redistricting plan.

If Gov. Abbott’s threat of prosecuting those who aid these fugitive Democrats is ignored, then they have the financial resources to stay away for many months, whereupon it would be too late to redistrict. Texas has an early primary scheduled for March 3, 2026.

Defiance by Democrat-controlled states of Republican ones is growing. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul has separately opposed a request by Texas to record a Texas judgment against an abortion provider in New York, who was sued in Texas for prescribing the abortion drug illegally for someone in Texas.

Gov. Hochul welcomed the Texas legislators who fled to New York in violation of Texas law, and even held a press conference with them. She blamed this on the same person that New York Democrats repeatedly try to scapegoat: Donald Trump.

There are 30-day limits on special legislative sessions in Texas, such that the current one must end by August 20. Gov. Greg Abbott can call as many new special sessions as it takes.

U.S. Marshals, the federal equivalent of sheriffs, typically handle federal warrants but also help in capturing and returning fugitives. In the acclaimed movie “The Fugitive” (1993), Tommy Lee Jones won an Oscar for portraying a U.S. Marshal chasing after a state-crime fugitive played by Harrison Ford.

Gov. Abbott could request assistance by the U.S. Marshals to return the renegade Texas Democrats who skipped town. Gov. Abbott has not yet publicly made this request, perhaps because of the pride that Texas takes in its independence, but Attorney General Pam Bondi could lead by stating her willingness to help.

John and Andy Schlafly are sons of Phyllis Schlafly (1924-2016) and lead the continuing Phyllis Schlafly Eagles organizations with writing and policy work.