



Senate Bill 1884

Testimony Before the Texas Senate Committee on State Affairs

By Melissa Ford Maldonado, Policy Director, Secure & Sovereign Texas

Dear Chairman Hughes and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 1884, which would enable Texas to penalize corrupt foreign actors who pose a threat to our state and our fellow Texans and put pressure on foreign countries to fight corruption and collusion.

My name is Melissa Ford Maldonado, and I am the policy director for Secure & Sovereign Texas, an initiative of the Texas Public Policy Foundation. The Foundation is grateful for your committee's leadership and bipartisan efforts on fighting the corruption that has been spilling into Texas for far too long.

In my role as policy director, much of my work focuses on Mexico policy, specifically on researching critical issues such as organized crime, drug trafficking, trade, and corruption & collusion by state actors in Mexico. The Foundation's latest [research](#) on these topics provides a deep dive into the complex dynamics of corruption in Mexico. It establishes irrefutable evidence of collusion between the Mexican state and criminal cartels, shedding light on corruption at every level of the government.

It is alarming to note that Mexico ranks among the [top five most corrupt](#) countries globally, with an industrial-scale, cartel-driven corruption that poses a direct threat to the United States, particularly to states like Texas, since we share a massive stretch of border with our southern neighbor.

Allow me to provide three examples of corruption bleeding across the border, and into the United States.

Tomás Yarrington Ruvalcaba [pleaded guilty](#) to conspiracy to commit money laundering after accepting millions in bribes from the Zetas and Gulf drug cartels while in office. He admitted to laundering between \$3.5 million and \$9.5 million and using that money to purchase property and luxury goods in the United States—cars, airplanes, large estates, commercial developments, beachfront condominiums, and multiple residences across Texas.

César Horacio Duarte Jáquez, former governor of Chihuahua, fled to El Paso after a [corruption investigation](#) into his administration revealed his multi-million-dollar embezzlement of public funds. He was a fugitive in the U.S. for three years until his arrest.

Genaro Garcia Luna, Mexico's former Secretary of Public Security, was [found guilty](#) of engaging in a continuing criminal enterprise and taking millions of dollars in cash bribes from the Sinaloa cartel.

Regrettably, there is no shortage of high-ranking Mexican government officials who have violated their oath of office, weakened Mexico, and betrayed their country by living a double life and taking millions from the violent drug cartels they should have been fighting. Accusations of corruption [have even extended to Mexican presidents](#).

The common thread between these names—governors, cabinet secretaries, presidential candidates—is that all of them not only wrongfully filled their pockets but used that dirty money to cause direct harm to Texas and Texans.

[SB 1884](#) allows Texas to hold corrupt individuals like them accountable—senior officeholders, societal elites, business owners—groups that have evaded justice for far too long. This bill will make it harder for people like them to slip under the radar and continue to reap the unjust rewards of their ill-gotten gains.

The passage of SB 1884 would send a message to corrupt foreign nationals who need regular access to the Texas economy to increase their wealth, and regular access to Texas society to enjoy it. It is a necessary first step in the process of rooting out foreign corruption in Texas and would contribute directly to the safety and security of Texas communities.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I'm here today as a witness to the devastating impact of corruption on my home country of Bolivia. I can tell you from experience that corruption is not a victimless crime. Corruption shatters entire communities, destroys democracies, and ultimately only serves the interests of criminals.

Texas must not turn a blind eye. Ignoring corruption will only embolden criminals to further their nefarious activities, continue to perpetuate the influx of lethal drugs into our country, and continue to wreak havoc on our communities with unprecedented levels of crime, violence, and an escalating humanitarian crisis.

It is imperative that we take action to combat corruption and safeguard our communities from its destructive effects.

Thank you for your time. I am grateful for your consideration of SB 1884 today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Melissa Ford Maldonado is the policy director for the Texas Public Policy Foundation's Secure and Sovereign Texas campaign, which strives to keep our nation safe and free. Melissa's work and expertise is focused on policies that secure the border and restore the rule of law as we fix and improve legal immigration to the United States. Melissa writes about foreign policy, public safety, drug cartels, and organized crime.

Melissa was born and raised in Cochabamba, Bolivia, but now calls Texas home. She moved to Tyler, Texas for college, and after completing a semester as a Bill Archer fellow in Washington D.C., she graduated from the University of Texas at Tyler in 2018 with bachelor's degrees in Economics and Political Science.

Prior to joining the Foundation, Melissa served at the White House under President Donald Trump, first in the Office of American Innovation and later in the Domestic Policy Council. After the President left office, Melissa worked for the Center for Advancing Opportunity, a research and education initiative in Washington D.C.

About Texas Public Policy Foundation

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The public is demanding a different direction for their government, and the Texas Public Policy Foundation is providing the ideas that enable policymakers to chart that new course.

