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FBI to Assist in Locating Texas Democrats Who Fled State Amid Redistricting Dispute

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Senator John Cornyn (Republican–Texas) announced that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has agreed to assist in locating Democratic state legislators who fled Texas to block a vote on a Republican-backed redistricting proposal. The lawmakers, who left the state to break quorum and delay legislative action, are currently staying in Illinois.

The move to involve federal law enforcement introduces a new level of tension between state and federal officials. According to Senator Cornyn, FBI Director Kash Patel approved the request to support state and local agencies. The senator thanked both Director Patel

and President Donald Trump for acting swiftly to enforce accountability. Cornyn argued that the legislators may have violated state bribery laws by allegedly receiving financial backing from outside groups in exchange for derailing the legislative session.

In a public statement, Senator Cornyn emphasized, “FBI has tools to aid state law enforcement when parties cross state lines, including to avoid testifying or fleeing a scene of a crime.” He further explained that the concern centers on potential bribery or public corruption charges stemming from financial support that the lawmakers may have accepted.

Despite the announcement, it remains unclear whether federal agents have been deployed or have taken any concrete action. As of Thursday morning, no law enforcement officers were reported to be present at the hotel in St. Charles, Illinois, where many of the Texas lawmakers are staying.

Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker dismissed the effort as political theater. “They’re grandstanding,” Pritzker said, asserting that no applicable federal laws exist in this situation. He further suggested that the federal presence, if any, might serve more to intimidate than to prosecute. “The FBI agents might show up just to, I don’t know, again, to put a show on,” he remarked.

Under Texas law, civil arrest warrants have been issued by the Speaker of the Texas House to compel attendance, but these are not enforceable across state lines. No criminal warrants have been filed.

The walkout stems from opposition to a new congressional map proposed by Republicans, which would reshape five Democrat-held districts to favor Republican candidates in upcoming elections. The effort is seen as part of a broader redistricting wave, with Republican-led states such as Missouri and Indiana examining similar measures. In response, Democratic-majority states like Illinois and California are considering their political countermeasures.

Dozens of Texas Democrats left the state on Sunday to prevent the Republican-controlled legislature from achieving quorum. Their coordinated departure has drawn national attention, further intensifying the partisan battle over electoral boundaries ahead of the 2026 midterm elections.

While the federal involvement remains limited at this point, the development underscores growing efforts among Republican lawmakers to enforce legislative responsibility and uphold state procedures, even when faced with interstate political resistance.