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By:  J. Johnson of Harris H.R. No. 1070

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, Ruth Simmons, president of Prairie View A&M University, has been named principal speaker for Harvard University's commencement celebration on May 27, 2021; and

WHEREAS, Born in Grapeland, Dr. Simmons grew up as the 12th child of sharecroppers; she earned a scholarship to Dillard University and after graduating summa cum laude in 1967, she went on to earn her doctoral degree in Romance languages and literatures from Harvard; for several years, she taught French at the University of New Orleans; a new career path in administration took her to California State University, and then to the University of Southern California, Princeton University, and Spelman College; in 1995, she was named president of Smith College, where she focused on increasing access and established the first engineering program at a women's college in the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, In 2001, Dr. Simmons became the first African American to lead an Ivy League institution when she was appointed president of Brown University; she earned wide acclaim for her achievements, including need-blind undergraduate financial aid, faculty expansion, enhanced curricula, and new facilities; moreover, she helped the school begin to confront its links to a shameful stain on American history, slavery and the slave trade; she created the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice, which released a report that has aided other institutions in addressing similar echoes of the nation's past; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Simmons retired in 2012, but six years later, as the graduate of a historically Black college, she felt called to accept the presidency of Prairie View A&M; while guiding the school, she has also continued to promote educational equity elsewhere; she testified on behalf of Harvard College in a lawsuit challenging its right to consider race as an admissions factor; over the years, she has received myriad accolades, among them an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Harvard, and in 2013, she was named Chevalier in the French National Order of the Legion of Honor, the highest decoration bestowed by the French government; and

WHEREAS, One of the nation's most dynamic and transformational leaders, Ruth Simmons has made a lasting, positive imprint on higher education and continues to work tirelessly to widen horizons of opportunities for all; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 87th Texas Legislature hereby congratulate Ruth Simmons on her selection as principal speaker for the 2021 Harvard University commencement celebration and extend to her sincere best wishes for the future; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be prepared for Dr. Simmons as an expression of high regard by the Texas House of Representatives.