

By: J. Johnson of Harris

H.R. No. 1070

R E S O L U T I O N

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

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

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

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

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

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

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