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WILHELMINA DELCO COLLECTION



The Delco Collection consists of more than 130 boxes of official documents, reports, memorabilia, correspondence, letters, memos, newspaper clippings and photographs stored in the Special Collections/Archives Department of the John B. Coleman Library. As part of a consultation grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the collection is being processed with the goal of providing access in the near future. Any questions may be directed to [Ms. Phyllis Earles](mailto:plearles@pvamu.edu) (plearles@pvamu.edu) at 936 261-1516.

Biography

Wilhelmina Ruth Fitzgerald Delco has been a dedicated leader in the Texas House of Representatives since her election in November 1974, when she became the first African American official elected at large from Travis County, later District 50. She was sworn into office in January, 1975 to serve her first term in the 64th Legislative Session. With the beginning of the 74th session, January 1995, Delco retired, concluding her tenth term and twentieth year in the Texas House of Representatives.

Wilhelmina Delco began her public service career as a member of the Austin Independent School District Board of Trustees in 1968, and served as Secretary of the Board from 1972 to 1974. She was also on the founding Board of Trustees of Austin Community College and served as secretary of the Board from 1973 to 1974. Through the years, Delco has served in leadership positions with a variety of local, state and national organizations including: the American Association for Higher Education; Educational Testing Service; Education Commission of the States; Diocesan Pastoral Council; National Girl Scout Council; KLRU TV-18 Board of Directors; Huston-Tillotson College; and Carnegie Foundation Advisory Panel for the Advanced Leadership Program Services Advancement of Teaching Governance Board; among many others.

Representative Delco's history of considerable influence in the area of higher education has permeated her tenure in the Texas House of Representatives. In 1979, she was appointed Chair of the House Higher Education committee, and she served in that capacity until her appointment as Speaker Pro Tempore in 1991. As Speaker Pro Tempore, from 1991 to 1993, Delco became the first woman and second African-American to hold that second highest position in the Texas House. During her last term, she served as Chair of the General Investigating Committee, Vice Chair of the Corrections Committee, as a member of the Higher Education Committee.

The House Committees on which Representative Delco has served include: Business and Commerce; Constitutional Amendments; Constitutional Revision; Health and Welfare; Chair, Health Facilities; Health Reorganization; Interim Committee to Study Alternatives for Public School Finance; Chair, Subcommittee on Curriculum reform and many others.

Throughout her political career, Delco has received numerous awards and honors including honorary degrees from nine colleges and universities as well as a host of local, statewide, and national awards. In recognition of her commitment to higher education while in office, Delco was appointed Chairperson of two national education efforts. At the request of U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley, she will chair the U.S. Department of Education's National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity. Delco will also chair the Compact for Faculty Diversity, a consortium of the New England Board of Education, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, and the Southern Regional Education Board. This national advisory committee will address

the issue of under-representation of minorities in the college teaching profession, and will garner and coordinate foundation support for minority doctoral scholars programs at major institutions of higher education in the country.

Mrs. Delco graduated from Wendell Phillips High School in Chicago, Illinois, where she served as President of the Student Body and was a member of the National Honor Society. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee where she majored in Sociology and minored in Economics and Business Administration. In addition to her political involvement, Mrs. Delco is a member of Holy Cross Catholic Church as well as a variety of civil organizations in the community. She has been married to Dr. Exalton A. Delco, Jr. for more than 40 years. She is the mother of four children and the grandmother of nine.

Maintained by [Phyllis Earles](#); Last revised 2/5/08 keh

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