

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Wilhelmina Delco

PERSON

Delco, Wilhelmina R. (Wilhelmina Ruth), 1929-

Alternative Names: The Honorable Wilhelmina Delco;

Life Dates: July 16, 1929-

Place of Birth: Chicago, Illinois, USA

Residence: Austin, Texas

Occupations: State Representative

Biographical Note

On July 16, 1929, Wilhelmina R. Delco was born to Juanita and William P. Fitzgerald in Chicago, Illinois. She attended Wendell Phillips High School in Chicago where she served as president of the student body and was a member of the National Honor Society. Delco received her B.A. degree in sociology from Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1950.

In 1952, Delco married, had four children and relocated to Texas. As a concerned parent, Delco became an active leader in the Parent Teacher Association of her children's school. Delco ran and was elected to the Austin Independent School District Board of Trustees in 1968, three days after the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This landmark victory made Delco the first African American elected to public office in Austin, Texas. Following her first term on the school board, Delco sought to become a force in statewide policy-making and ran a successful campaign for the Texas House of Representatives, making her the first African American elected official elected at-large in Travis County.

Delco served ten terms in the Texas Legislature and served on more than twenty different committees. Delco was a founding member of the Austin Community College Board. In 1979, Delco was appointed chair of the House Higher Education Committee where she served until 1991 when she was appointed speaker pro tempore. This made her the first woman and the second African American to hold the second highest position in the Texas House of Representatives.

Since her retirement from the Texas Legislature in 1995, Delco remains an active force

in education. Having been awarded honorary doctoral degrees from ten colleges and universities, Delco is the chair of the Board of Trustees at Houston-Tillotson College in Austin, Texas, and serves as an adjunct professor at the University of Texas at Austin with the Community College Leadership Program. She and her husband, Dr. Exalton A. Delco, Jr., live in Austin, Texas. They have four children and nine grandchildren.

Related Entries

Wendell Phillips Academy High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Fisk University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Texas Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Clerk

Austin Independent School District Board of Trustees [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1968 to 1974]

Member

Texas House of Representatives [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1974 to 1995]

Member, eventually Speaker pro Tempore

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Lifetime Member

Huston-Tillotson University [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Chair, Board of Trustees

Austin League of Women Voters [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Member

Texas Congress PTA [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Lifetime Member

Texas Women's Hall of Fame [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Member

National Advisory Committee on Institutional Equality and Integrity [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Chair