

STATE of TEXAS
HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES



GARNET F. COLEMAN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 147

August 15, 2011

Chairman Dan Branch
District 108
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Dear Chairman Branch,

As your committee looks at conference realignment for Texas universities, I would like to first extend my thanks for your continued support for the University of Houston and the crucial role you have played in helping the university obtain its coveted Tier One status. Further, I wish to express my firm and continuing support for the inclusion of the University of Houston in the Big 12. While I am saddened by the possible departure of Texas A&M from the Big 12, the Conference must find a replacement school, and the obvious choice is the University of Houston.

As you know, UH is the flagship university of the largest city in Texas and the fourth largest city in the nation. It is one of only three Tier One public universities in the state, a major economic driver in the region, and it boasts a strong history in academics, research, and athletics. Moreover, with an enrolment of almost 40,000 students, UH is the third largest university in the state, trailing only the University of Texas and Texas A&M. Despite this, however, UH does not currently belong to a major Bowl Championship Series (BCS) athletic conference.

UH can bring to the Big 12 a school with one of the largest television markets in the country, a dedicated and loyal alumni base, and one of the largest student bodies in the Conference. Additionally, UH's inclusion would reignite so many of the exciting rivalries with its fellow former Southwest Conference schools. Finally, we must ensure that the Big 12 remembers what the other major athletic conferences already know: the strength of the Conference depends on the inclusion of the strongest, most competitive schools in the area.

For UH, the benefits of belonging to a conference such as the Big 12 are significant. While those of us familiar with the university know firsthand its reputation for excellence, being a part of the Big 12 would showcase this excellence on the national stage. In the past few years, UH has demonstrated that

its athletes can compete with the best in the country, and being part of a major conference like the Big 12 would allow them to do just that.

While the positive effect on the athletics department would be significant, the benefits would extend far beyond the football field or basketball court. The increased revenue alone can help the school supercharge its already thriving academic performance, helping keep Texas students in Texas as well as attracting the best and brightest from around the country and world. Moreover, a strong athletics program fosters a greater school spirit and allegiance among its students and alumni, which invariably results in more donors and boosters. These increased private funds can help the university hire more professors, provide more scholarships, and fund much needed resources such as new labs and classrooms.

Finally, it is important to remember the positive benefit this would have not only for the city of Houston but for Texas as well. As UH continues to transition from a commuter-based university to one with a thriving campus community, Texas benefits from having yet another world-renowned institution of higher learning for our students to attend, and the increase in major sporting events will significantly increase tourism, national attention, and prestige for the state.

It is time to show the nation what we here in Texas already know: the University of Houston is one of this nation's premier institutions in all areas of academics, research, and athletics. Let's see to it that UH belongs in a conference befitting its reputation. Again, thank you for all the work that you and your committee have done for the University of Houston as well as the other fine universities in this state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James H. Coleman". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

CC: members of the House Committee on Higher Education