



C E L E B R A T I N G

*55 Years*  
ANNIVERSARY SYMPOSIUM

HOUSTON-GALVESTON AREA COUNCIL  
FIFTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY SYMPOSIUM  
Growing Stronger Together Through Regionalism

Friday, October 15, 2021





## WELCOME MESSAGE



On September 9, 1966, nine officials gathered at Friendswood Town Hall to initiate a new planning agency called the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC). These officials could not have been more different in their backgrounds, but they were united in a single purpose: to create a center of coordinated planning to foster the sustainable growth and prosperity of the Houston-Galveston region.

The Houston-Galveston region is quite unique compared with other regions in the United States. It is diverse in practically every way you can imagine – geographically, demographically, economically, and so on. That diversity of people, places, and ideas is one of our greatest strengths. It is the constant spark that breeds opportunity and excellence. It is what makes us so adaptable to change and innovative in our thinking. However, it can also make things tough when we are trying to reach a consensus. That is where the need for an organization like H-GAC becomes so apparent.

For more than half a century, H-GAC has acted as the forum for civic leaders and servants to have those tough conversations, understand our unique challenges and opportunities, and set the framework that will keep our region growing strong through the best and hardest of times. No matter who we are or where we come from, we have always kept the region's interests above our own. That is what we are here to celebrate today at this symposium commemorating our 55th anniversary – the spirit of regional cooperation and the coming together of exceptional people to share exceptional ideas and build an exceptional place to live, work, and thrive for what is now 7 million residents and counting.

To the leaders who have served on our boards, committees, and assemblies over the years, to the wonderful government, business, and community partners we've worked with, and to our amazing, dedicated staff, thank you all for helping to make our last 55 years so successful. We have built an incredible region together, and we look forward to working with you in charting the next 55 years of growth and prosperity.

Chuck Wemple,  
Executive Director of H-GAC

# Agenda

8:00 AM ..... NETWORKING BREAKFAST

## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

*Chuck Wemple, Executive Director, Houston-Galveston Area Council*

9 - 10:15 AM ..... PANEL DISCUSSION I  
"Understanding Regionalism and the Difference It Makes"

## PANELISTS

*Rissie Owens, Vice President, Huntsville I.S.D. Board of Trustees*

*Trey Duhon, Waller County Judge*

*Dr. Carol Lewis, Ph.D., Chair, Gulf Coast Rail District; Emeritus Director,  
Texas Southern University Center for Transportation Training and Research*

## MODERATOR

*Chuck Wemple, Executive Director, Houston-Galveston Area Council*

10:30 - 11:45 AM ..... PANEL DISCUSSION II  
"The Future Is Connected: The Evolution of Technology in the Region"

## PANELISTS

*Adrian Garcia, Commissioner, Harris County Precinct 2*

*B.J. Simon, President/CEO, Baytown-West Chambers County Economic Development  
Foundation*

*Guy Robert Jackson, CEO, Chambers County Abstract Co., Inc.*

## MODERATOR

*Chuck Wemple, Executive Director, Houston-Galveston Area Council*

Noon ..... LUNCH

1:00 PM ..... KEYNOTE PRESENTATION  
*Dr. Renu Khator, Ph.D., Chancellor, University of Houston System;  
President, University of Houston*

2:00 PM ..... CLOSING REMARKS  
*Chuck Wemple, Executive Director, Houston-Galveston Area Council*

## PANEL DISCUSSION I

“Understanding Regionalism and the Difference It Makes”

Moderator: Chuck Wemple, Executive Director, Houston-Galveston Area Council



Rissie Owens  
Vice President  
Huntsville I.S.D. Board of Trustees

Rissie Owens currently serves as vice president of the Huntsville I.S.D. Board of Trustees. She has been a member of the board since 2006. Owens has held a distinguished career in education and criminal justice. In 2015, she retired as chair of the Texas Board of Pardons & Paroles where, during her tenure, she received national and international recognitions. Additionally, she serves on the H-GAC Board of Directors as the representative for independent school districts. Owens has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Sam Houston State University, where she also serves as an adjunct faculty member in the College of Criminal Justice, and a master's degree in behavioral science from the University of Houston-Clear Lake.



Trey Duhon  
Waller County Judge

Carbett “Trey” J. Duhon, III serves as judge of Waller County and as president of the Waller County Sub-regional Planning Commission. He is a member of the H-GAC Board of Directors and serves on numerous committees, including as chair of the Plans and Projects Review Committee, vice chair of the Special Committee on Regional Broadband, on the Water Resources Committee, and the Texas Association of Counties’ Legislative Committee. Duhon also serves as a board member of the Waller County Juvenile Board and the Gulf Coast Rail District. He has been recognized as a fellow of the Texas Judicial Academy every year from 2017 to 2020.



Dr. Carol Lewis, Ph.D.  
Chair  
Gulf Coast Rail District

Emeritus Director  
Texas Southern University Center for Transportation Training  
and Research

Carol Abel Lewis, Ph.D., chairs the Gulf Coast Rail District as a joint appointee of Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner and Judge Lina Hidalgo and the Harris County Commissioner's Court. Lewis is a professor of transportation studies and emeritus director of the Center for Transportation Training and Research at Texas Southern University. She is responsible for educating students in fundamentals of transportation and urban transportation issues, as well as conducting operational and policy related transportation research. She served as past co-chair of the Transportation Advocacy Group.

## PANEL DISCUSSION II

"The Future Is Connected: The Evolution of Technology in the Region"

Moderator: Chuck Wemple, Executive Director, Houston-Galveston Area Council



Adrian Garcia  
Commissioner  
Harris County Precinct 2

Born and raised in the Northside, Precinct 2 has always been home to Commissioner Adrian Garcia. His 35-year career in public service began as a Houston police officer. In 1994, he was appointed by Mayor Lee Brown as director of the mayor's Anti-Gang Office. In 2003, he was elected to Houston City Council. During his tenure, he served as chair of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee and the Minority/Women Business Enterprise Committee. With the support of his peers, Mayor Bill White confirmed Garcia as mayor pro-tem. In 2008, he was elected as Harris County sheriff — the largest sheriff's office in Texas and the third largest in the U.S. He was elected as Harris County Precinct 2 commissioner in 2018.



B. J. Simon  
President/CEO  
Baytown-West Chambers County Economic Development  
Foundation

B. J. Simon is president and CEO of the Baytown-West Chambers County Economic Development Foundation. On staff since 2005, he is involved in most aspects of economic development, including business recruitment, retention and expansion, business development, labor analyses, workforce development, public policy, market research, retail development, contract administration, and strategic planning. Simon also serves on the boards of various civic and professional organizations, including the Gulf Coast Economic Development District (vice president) and the Houston-Galveston Area Emission Reduction Credit Organization (director).



Guy Robert Jackson  
CEO  
Chambers County Abstract Co., Inc.

Guy Robert Jackson is CEO of Chambers County Abstract Co., Inc., a title insurance agency based in Anahuac that has been in his family since 1929. Jackson previously served as mayor of Anahuac. He is also secretary of the Gulf Coast Economic Development District and a member of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board.

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Dr. Renu Khator, Ph.D.  
Chancellor, University of Houston System  
President, University of Houston

Nationally known as an education thought leader and higher education policy expert, Dr. Renu Khator, Ph.D., is currently serving as chancellor and president of the University of Houston System/University of Houston where she oversees a four-university system that serves nearly 74,000 students, has an annual budget that exceeds \$1.8 billion, and has a \$6 billion-plus impact on the Greater Houston area's economy each year.

Throughout her nearly 35-year career, Khator has directed the transformation of complex global organizations responsible for fulfilling critical and challenging missions worldwide in the health, technology, and energy industry.

Before joining the University of Houston System in early 2008, Khator held a variety of increasingly responsible executive positions within higher education, including provost and senior vice president of academic affairs at the University of South Florida and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of South Florida.

A champion of public universities, Khator has served on several leading national associations and advisory boards, including serving as the former chair of the American Council on Education, the National Collegiate Athletic Association, and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities.

A native of India, Khator earned her bachelor's degree from Kanpur University and her Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy degrees from Purdue University.





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Houston-Galveston Area Council would like to acknowledge people from the following groups for their leadership, partnership, and engagement in helping us build this great region over the past 55 years.

Current and past members of the H-GAC Assembly

Current and past members of the H-GAC Board of Directors

State and federal agency partners

### H-GAC Advisory Committees

Aging Programs and Advisory Committee

Clean Rivers Program Committee

Criminal Justice Advisory Committee

Geographic Data Workgroup

Natural Resources Advisory Committee

Regional Air Quality Planning Advisory Committee

Regional Flood Management Council

Regional Homeland Security Coordinating Council

Solid Waste Management Committee

### H-GAC Affiliate Groups

Area Emission Reduction Credit Organization

Corporation for Regional Excellence

Energy Purchasing Corporation

Gulf Coast Economic Development District

Gulf Coast Regional 9-1-1 Emergency Communications District

Gulf Coast Workforce Board  
Houston-Galveston Area Local Development Corporation  
Transportation Policy Council

And all the elected officials, local government staff, community leaders, and volunteers who have served on these groups as well as the community organizations, vendors, educational institutions, employers, and economic development partners we've had the pleasure of working with over the last 55 years – and those still to come.

Thank you all. You have been an integral part of our journey. We look forward to continuing our work with you and with new partners in the future.



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3555 Timmons Lane, Suite 120, Houston, Texas 77027  
713.627.3200 • Web: [h-gac.com](http://h-gac.com) • Social: [@HouGalvAreaCog](https://twitter.com/HouGalvAreaCog)