

## □ State Rep. Turner, HISD Accept \$10,000 Check from Kroger

Written by Forward Times Staff  
Thursday, 26 January 2012 11:00

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The effort by State Representative Sylvester Turner to improve Booker T. Washington High School received a major boost today when Kroger donated \$10,000 to the school. The funds, along with \$125,000 already raised by Turner and the community, will be used for academic programs, mentoring, the school's engineering magnet program and musical instruments for the band.

The check was presented to Turner and officials from the Houston Independent School District at the Kroger store at 1352 W. 43rd Street by Store Manager Jeff Bailey and Public Relations Manager Kristal Howard. "I want to thank Kroger on behalf of District 139 and everyone involved with Booker T. Washington," Turner said. "Kroger is a good neighbor and partner."

School Principal LaShonda Bilbo-Ervin said she appreciated the funds for programs, tools and supplies. HISD Board Member Rhonda Skillern-Jones thanked Kroger and everyone who has participated in the partnership to help Booker T. Washington.

Turner held a community meeting with parents, students and the general community at Booker

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T. Washington in Independence Heights on November 17 to discuss the problems the school faces. Turner is concerned that even though HISD has no current plans to close Washington, he believes it may become inevitable if the school continues to go down. He pointed out that Washington dropped to “Academically Unacceptable” in 2011.

The Cosmetology, Home Economics and Auto Mechanics programs have been cancelled and the band is down to very few students. The building is the same one built in 1959 but has not been maintained. He said more than 400 students zoned for Washington were going to other schools that have more programs and better facilities.

Turner called on the parents, students and community to step and do their part along with HISD.

“If you do not take ownership of this neighborhood school and volunteer and contribute,” Turner told the audience that night, “why should anyone do what you’re not prepared to do for yourselves? If you take your kids to another school, why should anyone help you? If you don’t speak positively about Washington, if you talk it down, what do you expect in return?”

The nearly 500 people who attended the meeting opened their wallets and their hearts to help the historic school at 119 E. 39th Street. Turner announced that he had raised \$100,000 from donors, including himself, the Texas Legislative Black Caucus, HEB and Perry Homes. Nearly \$4,000 was donated by attendees that night and more was pledged by local churches, businesses and alumni groups.

Since that meeting, Turner said he had received calls from a number of students who thanked him for his efforts. He said the students are excited, the teachers are motivated and the parents are committed.

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Turner's Action Plan for Booker T. Washington calls for a Task Force which will be comprised of students, teachers, business leaders, community leaders, alumni, church leaders and others "vested" in the success of the school. The Task Force will implement a strategic vision to rapidly boost enrollment; establish a massive action plan to boost the education of students through tutoring programs; teacher and student incentives (financial); increased teacher and school administration accountability; creating partnerships with local businesses to invest in the school's programs; recruit high profile alumni available to support the school financially and educationally and much more.

On Nov. 12, 2011, a state historical marker was placed at Booker T. Washington High School recognizing its founding in 1893 as Colored High School, the first high school in Houston open to African Americans. (The school was originally located in the Fourth Ward and moved to its current location in 1959.) It remained the only high school that accepted African American students until 1926. Washington was home to the first magnet program in the Houston Independent School District with its engineering program.{jcomments on}