



Center for Houston's Future Reflects on Sylvester Turner's Life of Service

MARCH 5, 2025 – Center for Houston's Future is saddened to learn of the death of Congressman, former State Representative, and former Mayor Sylvester Turner. He leaves a wide-reaching legacy of public service in Houston, in Texas and beyond. Always front and center was his passion to make Houston a better place and he did just that.

The Center is proud to have collaborated with Mayor Turner on a range of initiatives over the years, including resilience, immigration, and the energy transition.

In 2023, we honored him with our annual Eugene H. Vaughan Award, named after the Center's founder, for his lifetime of work that significantly shaped the future of our city and our region. Mayor Turner was also an honorary graduate of the Center's Business/Civic Leadership Forum, reflecting his dedication to training the next generation of leaders.

During the ceremony for the Vaughan Award, the Center highlighted, among other things, Turner's work as Mayor, including his strong response to Hurricane Harvey; launching of the city's first Climate Action Plan; his focus on revitalizing and improving the city's most underserved neighborhoods; and his continuation of Houston's long legacy of public-private partnerships.

"Sylvester Turner embodied the definition of a civic leader," said Brett Perlman, Center for Houston's Future's former CEO who first met Turner in Austin.

"I worked with Sylvester for over 25 years," Perlman said. "We first met when he was in the state legislature and I was a Commissioner on the Texas Public Utility Commission. He was by far one of the most knowledgeable members of the Legislature on electricity deregulation. He always provided both thoughtful support and insightful criticisms of the Commission, which made for better policy decisions. He was also a champion of those in need and was singlehandedly responsible for implementing the System Benefit fund, a discount program that lowered electricity prices for Texas' low-income families."

"He was also a fierce advocate. In particular, I remember a House floor debate between Rep. Turner, and then-Chair Steve Wolens, two trial lawyers known as strong orators. While I can't remember the exact outcome of the issue, I do remember Rep. Turner standing at the back mic of the House eloquently and strongly advocating for those he served. That day showed how the State of Texas was the clearly the winner for having strong leaders like Sylvester Turner, a man who was willing to dedicate his life to public service," Perlman added.

Center for Houston's Future was honored to work with Mayor Turner. On a national and state level, Mayor Turner was an outspoken and diehard supporter of Houston and everything we have to offer. We will miss him.

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