

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 151

Expressing support for the designation of February 16, 2025, as
“International Black Aviation Professionals Day”.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 21, 2025

Ms. WILLIAMS of Georgia (for herself, Mrs. MCBATH, Mr. BISHOP, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Ms. ADAMS, Ms. BARRAGÁN, Ms. BUDZINSKI, Ms. BYNUM, Mr. CARSON, Ms. DAVIDS of Kansas, Mr. FIELDS, Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Mrs. MCIVER, Ms. NORTON, Ms. PLASKETT, Ms. STRICKLAND, Ms. TITUS, Mr. TURNER of Texas, and Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and in addition to the Committee on Education and Workforce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

RESOLUTION

Expressing support for the designation of February 16, 2025, as “International Black Aviation Professionals Day”.

Whereas since the birth of aviation, Black Americans have made and continue to make significant contributions to flight, space exploration, and the aviation industry as a whole despite significant adversity;

Whereas aviation trailblazers like Emory C. Malick, the first licensed Black pilot, James H. Banning, the first Black pilot to fly across the United States, and Bessie “Queen” Coleman, the first licensed Black woman pilot,

barnstormed through barriers such as racism and sexism to have careers in aviation;

Whereas visionaries like William J. Powell, Jr., established the Bessie Coleman Flying Club, sponsored the first all-Black American airshow, wrote the book entitled “Black Wings”, produced a documentary film entitled “Unemployment, the Negro and Aviation”, and worked tirelessly to mobilize Black American youth to pursue careers in aviation;

Whereas Cornelius Coffey, a skilled Black American auto mechanic who dreamed of flying, and Willa Brown, the first Black woman to earn both a pilot’s license and a commercial license and the first Black woman to become an officer in the Illinois Civil Air Patrol, organized a group of Black air enthusiasts, established training classes and a school of aeronautics, and helped promote the 1939 flight of Chauncey Spencer and Dale White from Chicago to Washington, DC, to campaign for an end to racial segregation in aviation;

Whereas the Tuskegee Army Airfield, after which the Tuskegee Airmen were named, became a vital center for Black American servicemen and servicewomen to train as mechanics, control tower operators, and pilots of military aircrafts, launching the careers of many notable Black aviators, including General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., Amelia Jones, Linkwood Williams, Lieutenant Colonel Lee A. Archer, Major Charles Hall, Brigadier General Charles McGee, and many others;

Whereas the Red Tails of the 99th Fighter Squadron and later the 332d Fighter Group known as the Tuskegee Airmen made pioneering contributions to the United States war effort during World War II and the subse-

quent drive to end racial segregation in the United States Armed Forces;

Whereas, in 1958, Ruth Carol Taylor became the first Black regional flight attendant in the United States;

Whereas, in 1956, Patricia Banks-Edmiston filed, and, in 1960, ultimately won, a discrimination case against Capital Airlines, paving the way for her to become the first Black commercial flight attendant in the United States;

Whereas these historic firsts opened the skies for Black flight attendants, including Joan Dorsey, Diane Hunter, Patricia Grace Murphy, Undra Mays, Sheila Nutt, and Margaret Grant;

Whereas Oscar Wayman Holmes was the first Black air traffic controller and served as the first Black aircraft pilot and the first Black commissioned officer in the Navy, and Eleanor Williams became the first Black woman air traffic controller in 1971;

Whereas Black scientists reached the stars through the brilliance and fortitude of historically overlooked and unappreciated figures, including Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughn, and Mary Jackson, whose contributions in astrophysics allowed the United States to send people into space;

Whereas Black Americans soared amongst the stars when Guion “Guy” Bluford and Mae Jemison became the first Black American man and woman, respectively, to venture into space;

Whereas former astronaut Charles F. Bolden, Jr., the first Black American to be permanently named NASA Administrator, inspired the next generation of aviators and innovators;

Whereas the research of Black Americans like physician Vance H. Marchbanks and psychophysiolgogist Patricia Cowings made it safer for astronauts to travel to space;

Whereas Black inventors helped revolutionize air and space travel, including through the long-distance airplane designed by Charles W. Chappelle, contributions by Gladys West to the development of the Global Positioning System (GPS), technology created by George Robert Caruthers that allowed for photography in space, and the power source created by Lonnie Johnson for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s Galileo mission to Jupiter;

Whereas Maynard Holbrook Jackson, Jr., the first Black mayor of the City of Atlanta, Georgia, is renowned for his diversity and inclusion plan to ensure Black business owners had the opportunity to participate in the expansion of Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport into a major transportation hub, ahead of schedule and under budget, all while paving the way for minority-owned businesses to support the aviation industry through construction, management, and concessions programs at airports across the United States;

Whereas, on February 12, 2009, on a flight from Atlanta to Nashville, Captain Rachelle Jones Kerr, First Officer Stephanie Grant, and flight attendants Robin Rogers and Diana Galloway made history as the first all-female, all-Black American flight crew;

Whereas Casey Grant, an author, aviator, and a pioneer as one of the earliest Black flight attendants, has made it her mission to honor the legacy and contributions of Black pioneers in aviation through her books entitled “Stars in the Sky” and “Stars and Beyond” and her ef-

forts to introduce a new generation of young Black individuals across the United States and in Ghana to the field of aviation;

Whereas organizations including the Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals, the Black Aviation Airline Pioneers, the Sisters of the Skies, the Bessie Coleman Aviation All-Stars, the Black Flight Attendants of America, Inc., the Airport Minority Advisory Council, and more continue to preserve the legacy and support the future of Black Americans in aviation;

Whereas Black Americans have long served in every aspect of aviation, from skycaps who greet travelers arriving at the airport, to ticketing agents who ensure travelers' itineraries are in order, to ground crew, mechanics, and many others who make the aviation industry safe and reliable;

Whereas the Federal Aviation Administration provides opportunities to eligible students from historically underrepresented backgrounds in the fields of aviation, aeronautics, and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) through the STEM Aviation and Space Education Program by recruiting candidates from Historically Black Colleges and Universities for programs such as the Minority Serving Institutions Intern Program; and

Whereas public and private sector efforts to recruit, retain, and support talented Black Americans through increased emphasis on intentional diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, programs, and commitments and investments in programs that expose underrepresented groups to careers in aviation will ultimately help diversify the workforce for decades to come: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) expresses support for the designation of
3 “International Black Aviation Professionals Day”;

4 (2) encourages the observation of “Inter-
5 national Black Aviation Professionals Day” through
6 recognition and celebration of the contributions of
7 Black aviation professionals; and

8 (3) requests that the President issue a procla-
9 mation calling upon the people of the United States
10 to—

11 (A) recognize the stories and contributions
12 of Black American aviation professionals who
13 broke barriers, innovated, and took aviation to
14 greater heights;

15 (B) provide enhanced curriculum in
16 schools, libraries, and other places of learning
17 to educate all people of the United States with
18 respect to the contributions of Black aviation
19 pioneers; and

20 (C) support greater opportunities for Black
21 Americans in all areas of aviation.

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