

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 73

Designating February 16, 2023, as “International Black Aviation Professionals Day”.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 16, 2023

Mr. OSSOFF submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

RESOLUTION

Designating February 16, 2023, 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 William J. Powell, Jr., was a visionary who 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 auto mechanic who dreamed of flying, and Willa Brown, the first Black woman to earn both a pilot 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 servicemembers 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 subsequent 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 Black commissioned officer in the United States Navy, and, in 1971, Eleanor Williams became the first Black woman air traffic controller;

Whereas Black scientists have played an integral role in the United States, reaching 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 individuals into space;

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

Whereas Black American inventors helped revolutionize air and space travel, including Charles W. Chappelle designing a long-distance airplane, Gladys West contributing to the development of the Global Positioning System (GPS), George Robert Carruthers creating technology that al-

lowed for photography in space, and Lonnie Johnson creating the power source for the Galileo mission to Jupiter for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration;

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, an aviator, and a pioneer in her own right as 1 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 efforts 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., and more continue to preserve the legacy 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, and ticketing agents, who ensure the itineraries of travelers 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 and aero-

nautics, and science, technology, engineering, and math (referred to in this preamble as “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 promote talented Black Americans through increased emphasis on intentional diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, programs, and commitments, as well as 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 Senate—

2 (1) designates February 16, 2023, as “Inter-
3 national Black Aviation Professionals Day”;

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

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

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

1 (B) to provide an enhanced curriculum in
2 schools, libraries, and other places of learning
3 to educate all individuals of the United States
4 with respect to the contributions of Black avia-
5 tion pioneers; and

6 (C) to support greater opportunities for
7 Black Americans in all areas of aviation.

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