

115TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 6795

To award a gold medal on behalf of the United States Congress to the women who worked as computers, mathematicians, and engineers for the National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration from the 1930s to the 1970s in recognition for their service to the Nation in the fields of aeronautics and astronautics.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 13, 2018

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas (for herself and Mr. LUCAS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committee on House Administration, 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

A BILL

To award a gold medal on behalf of the United States Congress to the women who worked as computers, mathematicians, and engineers for the National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration from the 1930s to the 1970s in recognition for their service to the Nation in the fields of aeronautics and astronautics.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Hidden Figures Con-
3 gressional Gold Medal Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

5 In this Act:

6 (1) NACA.—The term “NACA” means the Na-
7 tional Advisory Committee for Aeronautics.

8 (2) NASA.—The term “NASA” means the Na-
9 tional Aeronautics and Space Administration.

10 **SEC. 3. FINDINGS.**

11 Congress finds the following:

12 (1) In 1935, NACA (predecessor to NASA)
13 hired five women to be the first “computer pool” at
14 the Langley Memorial Aeronautical Laboratory
15 where they took on calculating work previously done
16 by male engineers.

17 (2) During the 1940s, NACA also began re-
18 cruiting African-American women to work as com-
19 puters, initially segregating them from their White
20 counterparts in a group known as the “West Area
21 Computers” where they were restricted to segregated
22 dining and bathroom facilities.

23 (3) Dorothy Vaughan began working as a mem-
24 ber of the West Area Computing unit in 1943 where
25 her work and talent for leadership led her to become

1 both a respected mathematician and NACA's first
2 African-American manager.

3 (4) Mary Jackson joined the West Area Com-
4 puting unit in 1951 and petitioned the city of
5 Hampton to allow her to take graduate-level courses
6 in math and physics at the all-White Hampton High
7 School which enabled her to become the first Afri-
8 can-American female engineer at NASA.

9 (5) Katherine Johnson, who started her career
10 in the West Area Computing unit in 1953, cal-
11 culated the trajectory for Alan Shepard's Freedom 7
12 mission in 1961, which was the first human
13 spaceflight by an individual from the United States.

14 (6) Dr. Christine Darden began her career as
15 a computer at NASA's Langley Research Center in
16 1967 and later led the Sonic Boom Team where her
17 work on sonic boom minimization helped to revolu-
18 tionize aeronautical design.

19 (7) The stories of Dorothy Vaughan, Mary
20 Jackson, Katherine Johnson, and Dr. Christine Dar-
21 den were portrayed in the 2016 book by Margot
22 Shetterly, entitled "Hidden Figures: The Untold
23 True Story of Four African-American Women Who
24 Helped Launch Our Nation into Space" and subse-
25 quent movie adaptation.

1 (8) The stories of these four women exemplify
2 the experiences of hundreds of women who worked
3 as computers, mathematicians, and engineers at
4 NACA dating back to the 1930s.

5 (9) The women computers, mathematicians,
6 and engineers of NACA and NASA were well re-
7 garded for their skill and received praise for per-
8 forming calculations more rapidly and accurately
9 than male engineers could.

10 (10) Their handmade calculations played an in-
11 tegral role in aircraft testing during World War II,
12 supersonic flight research, sending the Voyager
13 probes to explore the solar system, and the United
14 States landing the first man on the lunar surface.

15 **SEC. 4. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

16 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of
17 the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tem-
18 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements
19 for the presentation, on behalf of Congress, of five gold
20 medals of appropriate design as follows:

21 (1) One gold medal to Katherine Johnson, in
22 recognition of her service to the United States as a
23 mathematician.

1 (2) One gold medal to Dr. Christine Darden, in
2 recognition of her service to the United States as an
3 aeronautical engineer.

4 (3) In recognition of their service to the United
5 States during the Space Race, two gold medals to
6 commemorate the lives of—

7 (A) Dorothy Vaughan; and

8 (B) Mary Jackson.

9 (4) One gold medal in recognition of all women
10 who served as computers, mathematicians, and engi-
11 neers at NACA and NASA from the 1930s to the
12 1970s.

13 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For purposes of the
14 presentation referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary
15 of the Treasury (referred to in this Act as the “Sec-
16 retary”) shall strike gold medals with suitable emblems,
17 devices, and inscriptions to be determined by the Sec-
18 retary.

19 (c) TRANSFER OF CERTAIN MEDALS AFTER PRES-
20 ENTATION.—

21 (1) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

22 (A) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of
23 the gold medals in honor of Dorothy Vaughan
24 and all women computers, mathematicians, and
25 engineers under subsection (a), the gold medals

1 shall be given to the Smithsonian Institution,
2 where they shall be available for display as ap-
3 propriate and made available for research.

4 (B) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense
5 of Congress that the Smithsonian Institution
6 shall make the gold medals received under sub-
7 paragraph (A) available for—

8 (i) display, particularly at the Na-
9 tional Museum of African American His-
10 tory and Culture; or

11 (ii) loan, as appropriate, so that the
12 medals may be displayed elsewhere.

13 (2) TRANSFER TO FAMILY.—Following the
14 award of the gold medal in honor of Mary Jackson
15 under subsection (a)(3)(B), the medal shall be given
16 to her family.

17 **SEC. 5. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

18 Under such regulations as the Secretary may pre-
19 scribe, the Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
20 bronze of the gold medals struck under this Act, at a price
21 sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor,
22 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

1 **SEC. 6. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

2 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—Medals struck pursuant to
3 this Act are National medals for purposes of chapter 51
4 of title 31, United States Code.

5 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of sections
6 5134 and 5136 of title 31, United States Code, all medals
7 struck under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic
8 items.

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