



HR0810

LRB101 20925 ECR 70881 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of Representatives are saddened to learn of the death of Katherine Johnson, who passed away on February 24, 2020; and

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WHEREAS, Katherine Johnson was born to Joylette and Joshua Coleman in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia on August 26, 1918; at the age of 15, she enrolled at West Virginia State College and graduated with the highest honors in math and French in 1937; with research opportunities for black female teenage mathematicians negligible, she took a job as a school teacher in Marion, Virginia, where she met and married James Goble; and

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WHEREAS, Katherine Johnson and her husband moved to Morrisville, West Virginia, where she was the first black woman to enroll in a master's class at West Virginia University in Morgantown; she left academia to raise her children but returned to teaching after her children were grown; and

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WHEREAS, In June of 1953, Katherine Johnson was hired as a computer by Langley Memorial Aeronautical Laboratory; though she faced Jim Crow laws and segregation, she thrived and was promoted to the flight research division after two weeks; in 1958, after years of pressure, she became the first woman to

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1 attend the editorial meetings of the guidance and control  
2 branch of what was to become the Aerospace Mechanics Division  
3 of NASA; and

4 WHEREAS, After her husband's death in 1956, Katherine  
5 Johnson married James A. Johnson in 1959; and

6 WHEREAS, Katherine Johnson's calculations were crucial to  
7 many important NASA missions; she played a key role when Alan  
8 Shepard became the first American in space during his 1961  
9 Mercury mission; John Glenn, the first American to orbit the  
10 Earth, refused to fly unless she verified the mathematical work  
11 completed by NASA's digital computers; and

12 WHEREAS, Katherine Johnson calculated trajectories when  
13 Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin made the first moon landing in  
14 July of 1969 and for the aborted 1970 Apollo 13 mission; she  
15 was also involved in the early years of the space shuttle and  
16 the Earth Resources satellite; after co-authoring 26  
17 scientific papers and 33 years of service, she retired from  
18 NASA in 1986; and

19 WHEREAS, Katherine Johnson was presented with the  
20 Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Barack Obama in  
21 2015; the BBC included her in its list of the 100 most  
22 influential women worldwide in 2016; West Virginia State

1 University inaugurated a scholarship in her honor, and she  
2 received a plethora of honorary degrees and many awards from  
3 NASA; and

4 WHEREAS, Katherine Johnson's contributions were largely  
5 unknown to the general public until the 2016 release of the  
6 Oscar nominated film *Hidden Figures*, which detailed the work  
7 she and fellow black female computers Dorothy Vaughn and Mary  
8 Johnson did for NASA; Katherine was honored with a standing  
9 ovation while on stage at that year's Academy Awards; and

10 WHEREAS, Katherine Johnson spent her later years  
11 encouraging students to enter the fields of science,  
12 engineering, mathematics, and technology; she was a member of  
13 Alpha Kappa Alpha, the first sorority established by and for  
14 African-American women, and was a stalwart of the choir at  
15 Carver Presbyterian Church in Newport for over half a century;  
16 and

17 WHEREAS, Katherine Johnson was preceded in death by her  
18 parents, Joylette and Joshua Coleman; her first husband, James  
19 Goble; her second husband, James A. Johnson; and her daughter,  
20 Connie; and

21 WHEREAS, Katherine Johnson is survived by her two  
22 daughters, Joylette and Kathy; her six grandchildren; and her

1 11 great-grandchildren; therefore, be it

2       RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE  
3 HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
4 we mourn the passing of Katherine Johnson and extend our  
5 sincere condolences to her family, friends, and all who knew  
6 and loved her; and be it further

7       RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
8 presented to the family of Katherine Johnson as an expression  
9 of our deepest sympathy.