

2018 SESSION

ENROLLED

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 168

Commending Gladys West.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 26, 2018
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 27, 2018

WHEREAS, Gladys West, a pioneering mathematician and King George County resident, forged a historic 42-year career at Naval Support Facility Dahlgren and made valuable contributions to the development of the Global Positioning System; and

WHEREAS, born in Dinwiddie County, Gladys West graduated at the top of her high school class and secured a scholarship to Virginia State University, where she received a bachelor's degree in mathematics; after teaching school in Sussex County for two years, she continued her studies and earned a master's degree; and

WHEREAS, in 1956, Gladys West's mathematical talents secured her a position at Naval Support Facility Dahlgren, then known as the Naval Proving Ground; she was only the second African American woman hired at the facility and was one of just four black employees; and

WHEREAS, Gladys West worked at Naval Support Facility Dahlgren for 42 years, climbing the ranks of the organization while serving as a programmer for large-scale computers and a project manager for data processing systems used in the analysis of satellite data; during the 1950s and 1960s, her calculations and mathematical work contributed to the development of the modern Global Positioning System (GPS); and

WHEREAS, along with making major technological breakthroughs at Naval Support Facility Dahlgren, Gladys West also met Ira West, her husband of over 60 years; and

WHEREAS, throughout her career at Naval Support Facility Dahlgren, Gladys West earned the trust and respect of her colleagues for her analytical skill and her ability to accurately calculate complex mathematical figures; among other projects, she worked on Seasat, the first satellite designed for remote sensing of the oceans with synthetic aperture radar; and

WHEREAS, Gladys West retired from Naval Support Facility Dahlgren in 1998; she has since earned a Ph.D. from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and begun writing her memoirs; and

WHEREAS, in a 2017 message commemorating Black History Month, the commanding officer of Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren Division hailed Gladys West for her integral role in developing GPS and noted that her mathematical work had made a significant impact on the world; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Gladys West for her trailblazing career in mathematics and vital contributions to modern technology; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Gladys West as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for her remarkable accomplishments and best wishes for continued success.

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