

20109019D

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 205

Offered February 28, 2020

Celebrating the life of Katherine Johnson.

Patrons—Locke, Barker, Bell, Boysko, Chafin, Chase, Cosgrove, Deeds, DeSteph, Dunnavant, Ebbin, Edwards, Favola, Hanger, Hashmi, Howell, Kiggans, Lewis, Lucas, Marsden, Mason, McClellan, McDougale, McPike, Morrissey, Newman, Norment, Obenshain, Peake, Petersen, Pillion, Reeves, Ruff, Saslaw, Spruill, Stanley, Stuart, Suetterlein, Surovell and Vogel

WHEREAS, Katherine Johnson, a National Aeronautics and Space Administration mathematician celebrated for her role in both breaking down racial barriers in the United States and pioneering manned flight in outer space, died on February 24, 2020; and

WHEREAS, born in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, where public education was not available to African Americans beyond the eighth grade, Katherine Johnson's family made great efforts to allow her to attend the historically black West Virginia State College, from which she graduated at the age of 18 with summa cum laude honors and degrees in mathematics and French; and

WHEREAS, Katherine Johnson was one of three students to first integrate the University of West Virginia's graduate programs, but she would leave academia after one semester to raise her family and later relocated to Newport News; and

WHEREAS, Katherine Johnson's role in the history of manned space flight began in 1953, when she joined the segregated West Area computing unit at the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics' Langley Aeronautical Laboratory; her matchless talent was soon recognized and, in 1960, she became the first woman in the history of the flight research division to be credited as an author on one of its published reports; and

WHEREAS, responsible for computing rocket trajectories for the missions to outer space, Katherine Johnson's work was essential to the historic achievements of several astronauts, including Alan Shepherd, the first American to travel in space; John Glenn, the first American to orbit the earth; and Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, the first humans to land on the moon; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of her profound influence during the nascent days of the United States' space program and her contributions toward bringing an end to America's segregationist practices, Katherine Johnson was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, by President Barack Obama in 2015; and

WHEREAS, Katherine Johnson's story was the subject of the 2016 major motion picture, *Hidden Figures*, garnering her long overdue acknowledgment and praise, as well as legions of fans and admirers inspired by her courageous and remarkable life; and

WHEREAS, in her later years, Katherine Johnson advocated for young women and men to pursue interests in science, math, and technology, serving as testament to the limitless accomplishments one can achieve through steadfast dedication and a passionate sense of purpose; and

WHEREAS, preceded in death by her first husband, James Goble; her second husband, James A. Johnson; and her daughter Connie, Katherine Johnson will be fondly remembered and dearly missed by her daughters, Joylette and Kathy, and their families; and numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of Katherine Johnson, whose role in the history of the Commonwealth and the United States will long be remembered and cherished; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Katherine Johnson as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for her memory.

INTRODUCED

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