



Statement of Chairman Frank Lucas

Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony

In honor of Katherine Johnson, Dr. Christine Darden, Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, and all the women who contributed to the success of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration during the Space Race recognized by the Hidden Figures Congressional Gold Medal Act.

September 18, 2024

It's an honor to be here with the friends, families, and loved ones of today's Congressional Gold Medal recipients – Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, and Christine Darden.

I was proud to join Eddie Bernice Johnson, the previous Chairwoman of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee, in cosponsoring the bill that awarded these medals.

Eddie Bernice knew a thing or two about being a trailblazer herself, having become the first woman and first African American to chair the Science Committee.

Honoring the Hidden Figures of the space race was an important cause for her, and I wish she could be with us today to see the results of her hard work and to celebrate the pioneering women of NASA.

For years, female computers, mathematicians, and engineers helped drive NASA's unprecedented achievements during the space race despite facing gender barriers.

They were paid less, received fewer opportunities for advancement, and were not recognized for their contributions, often having to submit their work anonymously.

Women of color like Katherine Johnson, Christine Darden, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson faced even more disadvantages from segregation and racism.

And yet they persisted in their work, helping to send John Glenn into orbit, to land the first humans on the Moon, and to launch enduring scientific missions like the Voyager probes.

Their achievements are all the more impressive given the challenges they faced.

Awarding them the Congressional Gold Medal honors their lives and work and ensures they will continue to inspire Americans for years to come.

When the first woman lands on the Moon in the Artemis program, she will follow a trail blazed by the women we honor today.

I'm proud to have played a small role in giving them the recognition they deserve.