

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 195

Commending Lieutenant Colonel Theresa M. Claiborne, USAF, Ret.

Agreed to by the Senate, January 16, 2025

WHEREAS, Lieutenant Colonel Theresa M. Claiborne, USAF, Ret., an honorable veteran and distinguished member of the Emporia community who made history as the first Black woman to fly in the United States Air Force, retired from United Airlines on May 23, 2024; and

WHEREAS, Theresa Claiborne joined the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps at the University of California at Berkeley and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the United States Air Force (USAF) on June 20, 1981; and

WHEREAS, Theresa Claiborne graduated from undergraduate pilot training at Laughlin Air Force Base in Texas on September 16, 1982, becoming the first Black female pilot in the USAF; and

WHEREAS, Theresa Claiborne piloted the KC-135A aircraft over her seven years of active duty with the USAF and then continued to serve with the USAF Reserves as an instructor pilot on the KC-135E aircraft and as a flight commander until her retirement from the military on January 6, 2003; and

WHEREAS, Theresa Claiborne logged more than 3,000 flight hours during her two decades of military service, achieving the rank of lieutenant colonel; and

WHEREAS, Theresa Claiborne joined United Airlines on January 15, 1990, first as a flight engineer on the Boeing 727 and later as pilot of several other aircraft in the airline's fleet, tallying more than 20,000 flight hours and attaining the rank of captain over an accomplished, 34-year professional career; and

WHEREAS, Theresa Claiborne has fostered the success of countless young people in her capacity as both president and founding member of Sisters of the Skies, a nonprofit organization dedicated to encouraging more Black women to pursue careers as professional pilots; and

WHEREAS, Theresa Claiborne's efforts to promote women in aviation include her service as a member of the board of directors of the National Women Airforce Service Pilots World War II Museum in Sweetwater, Texas, and as a board member of the Grand Dames of Aviation; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of her lasting impact on the aviation industry, Theresa Claiborne was inducted into the Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals Hall of Fame in 2017; and

WHEREAS, Theresa Claiborne's hard work, determination, and unwavering sense of purpose have helped to forge a path for many Black female aviators to follow, earning her the praise and admiration of all Virginians; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate of Virginia, That Lieutenant Colonel Theresa M. Claiborne, USAF, Ret., hereby be commended for her remarkable and pioneering achievements on the occasion of her retirement; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Lieutenant Colonel Theresa M. Claiborne, USAF, Ret., as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's admiration for her service and best wishes for a joyful and fulfilling retirement.

ENROLLED

SR195ER