



June 8, 2023

The Honorable Chrissy Houlahan  
U.S. Representative  
1727 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Houlahan,

On behalf of the Aerospace Industries Association (AIA), which represents more than 320 American aerospace and defense companies, thank you for your leadership in recognizing the achievements of the Mercury 13 and their role in inspiring more women to enter STEM fields.

We write in support of the Mercury 13 Congressional Gold Medal Act. Our members are America's leading designers and manufacturers of commercial aircraft, engines, satellites, and launch vehicles. These cutting-edge, highly advanced innovations and technologies have been made possible through the impressive work of both men and women in aerospace. The First Lady Astronaut Trainees (FLATS) program represents a group of trailblazing women that paved the way for women at NASA and female astronauts. Your act serves as an opportunity to honor these women for their revolutionary achievements by presenting the group with a Congressional Gold Medal, which will be displayed in the National Air and Space Museum.

Though their training was not a part of the NASA program, the Mercury 13 astronauts performed better in several tests than the Mercury 7 astronauts selected for space travel. These women helped open the door for more women to travel to space. Due to gender-based restrictions, none of the Mercury crew members were ever permitted to travel to space, but they helped pave the way for future female astronauts and pilots. In 2007, during the 110th Congress, a motion celebrating these women was recorded in the Congressional Record. H.Res. 421, a resolution honoring the Mercury 13's ground-breaking achievements, calls on young women to follow in their footsteps and seek careers in aerospace, astronautics, engineering, and science. This act will bestow a formal recognition of the group's historical accomplishments, their work for gender equity, and in respect of their important example of women in STEM fields.

AIA urges the House to consider Mercury 13 Congressional Gold Medal Act and support the awarding of Mercury 13 a Congressional Gold Medal. Doing so will ensure these momentous accomplishments don't go unacknowledged as promoting gender equity is in STEM fields and the aerospace and defense industry is prioritized for decades to come.

We thank you again for your leadership on this issue and for introducing this symbolic act.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Fanning". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eric Fanning  
President and CEO  
Aerospace Industries Association