

WASHINGTON (March 10) – Congressman Spencer Bachus (AL-6) today said woman pilots who served America during World War II are finally receiving proper recognition for their skill and heroism.

Bachus commended Mary Helen Foster of Northport and members of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) who were presented with the nation's highest civilian honor, the Congressional Gold Medal, during a ceremony at Emancipation Hall in the U.S. Capitol today.

Congressman Bachus, who personally congratulated Mrs. Foster in the ceremony hall, stated, "For too many years, Mary Helen Foster and her sister pilots in the WASPs were the unknown heroines of World War II. They were aviation pioneers who served us on the homefront just as soldiers were serving us overseas. In the face of challenging and dangerous assignments, they displayed courage and commitment second to none. They are now properly assuming their distinguished place in America's military history, and the Congressional Gold Medal is a way that our nation can express gratitude to them."

The WASPs provided vital military air services in the U.S. during World War II at a time of pilot shortages, transporting aircraft, hauling targets, and conducting training. Of the 1,074 women who completed training, 38 died in service. Despite their sacrifices, the WASPs were not recognized with veteran status until 1977.

Bachus, who cosponsored the legislation authorizing the special honor, worked to ensure rapid consideration of the bill in his role as Ranking Member on the House Financial Services Committee. The measure, which was signed into law on July 1, 2009, moved from introduction to final passage in near-record time for commemorative legislation.

