

Legislation Text

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Recognizing and honoring the heroism of Captain Tammie Jo Shults, who successfully executed an emergency landing of Southwest Flight 1380 at the Philadelphia International Airport on April 17, 2018, saving the lives of 148 people in the aftermath of a blown engine.

WHEREAS, Captain Tammie Jo Shults, a 56 year old pilot and Navy veteran, grew up in New Mexico and dreamed of becoming a pilot from a young age when she would watch Air Force planes fly over her family's ranch. In her junior year in college, she met a "girl who had just received her Air Force wings" and said, "My heart jumped. Girls did fly!"; and

WHEREAS, Following her undergraduate education, Captain Shults was denied entry into the Air Force on the basis of her gender, but remained determined to "break into the club" of male military aviators. She enlisted in the Navy as a pilot, thus initiating a decade of courageous service that transcended and broke gender boundaries; and

WHEREAS, Upon finishing flight school, Captain Shults became one of the first female fighter pilots in the Navy to fly a tactical aircraft, and was the first to fly an F/A 18 Hornet. During the Gulf War, Shults' squadron was led by the Navy's first female air commander in an era when women were seldom in combat missions. As a result of her service, Captain Shults rose quickly to the rank of Lieutenant Commander; and

WHEREAS, Captain Shults retired from the Navy in 1993 as a highly-decorated officer, honored with a National Defense Service Medal, expert pistol Marksmanship Medal and twice awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal; and

WHEREAS, Captain Shults became a commercial pilot at Southwest Airlines, not only breaking ground as one of the few women in her field but as a military pilot in a time when today only a third of private sector U.S. pilots have military backgrounds, down from 80 percent in the 1960s; and

WHEREAS, Captain Shults credits her deep religious faith and love of her husband, children, and family as guiding her work and life; and

WHEREAS, On April 17, 2018, on a seemingly routine flight from New York to Dallas, Shults' plane experienced an engine fire 20 minutes after take-off when its left turbine failed, sending debris and shrapnel into the passenger cabin and blowing out a window; and

WHEREAS, Air traffic control recorded Captain Shults' well-known calmness as she announced without any alarm in her voice that her plane was making an emergency landing with "149 souls on board" and that "we have part of the aircraft missing, so we're going to need to slow down a bit"; and

WHEREAS, In the forty minutes after the engine failed, Shults displayed "nerves of steel" and never panicked even as her plane dropped 20,000 feet in six minutes as she maneuvered it towards Philadelphia International Airport. She maintained steadfast communication to ensure that passengers and crew remained calm and that

medical care was prepared and waiting on the runway; and

WHEREAS, At 11:20 a.m., Captain Shults steered Southwest Flight 1380 to a smooth landing on Runway 27L. Seven of the 144 passengers aboard had been injured in addition to one fatality; and

WHEREAS, After the landing, Captain Shults reportedly came out of the cockpit wearing a bomber jacket and hugged and spoke with every single one of the passengers personally. As one passenger said to the *Washington Post*, “What do you want to know about [Shults] other than she’s an angel?”; and

WHEREAS, In the days following, Captain Shults has chosen to not seek the media limelight, but instead released a statement from her and her co-pilot that they were “simply doing our jobs”; and

WHEREAS, Doing her job meant that Captain Shults’ bravery, skill, calmness, and tenacity not only saved the lives of 148 passengers, but also shows that, time and time again, women get the job done. As Shults once remarked in an interview with *All Hands* magazine, “It would be nice if they would take away the ceilings [women] have over our heads”; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Council of the City of Philadelphia recognizes and honors the heroism of Captain Tammie Jo Shults, who successfully executed an emergency landing of Southwest Flight 1380 at the Philadelphia International Airport on April 17, 2018, saving the lives of 148 people in the aftermath of a blown engine.