

News



Many of our engagements involve matters in which our clients face significant public attention. The following is a list of news stories about the firm, our clients, cases and the results we have achieved.

Kobre & Kim Honors Katherine Johnson for Black History Month

February 28, 2020

In honor of Black History Month, Kobre & Kim continues its reflections on the unique contributions made by African Americans both inside and outside the legal industry. As the month draws to a close, we would like to pay tribute to NASA mathematician Katherine Johnson, who unfortunately passed away this week.

With a talent for numbers, Ms. Johnson finished high school by age 14 and graduated from West Virginia State College, a historically black college, by 18, taking every math course offered. She joined the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, the precursor to NASA, in 1953, working as a “computer” in a sex and race segregated workplace.

Assigned to help an all-male flight research team, she was able to point out mistakes in her male bosses’ calculations. Soon, despite the gender and racial barriers, her talent, persistence and willingness to speak out made her the first woman to be credited on a flight-trajectory report, and the first woman to be allowed into the engineers’ lectures (after pointedly asking her male colleagues, “Is there a law against it?”).

When NASA moved to focus on spaceflight, Ms. Johnson was at the forefront, plotting trajectories of spacecraft, developing the launch window and making sure that the space modules could make it back to Earth safely. She ensured the safe landing of Alan Shepard in 1961 and John Glenn in 1962; Glenn even refused to get on another spacecraft until Ms. Johnson had checked the numbers. She calculated the timings for the first Moon landings, worked on the Space Shuttle, and devised a method for astronauts to tell where they were with a star chart. Her calculations ensured the safe return of the Apollo 13 mission.

Ms. Johnson’s contributions went relatively unnoticed until a book and subsequent film adaptation called “Hidden Figures” came out in 2016. President Obama awarded Ms. Johnson with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2015, at age 97. She passed away on February 24, 2020, aged 101.