



10 December 2019

Sponsors: Representatives Sobecki and Sheehy,

Cosponsors: Representatives Cupp, Smith, K., Miller, A., Hoops, Miller, J., Crossman, Riedel, Romanchuk, Strahorn, Lepore-Hagan, Russo, Holmes, A., Lightbody, Blair, Howse, and members of the General Assembly of the State of Ohio

We, the staff of the Armstrong Air & Space Museum, thank you for this opportunity to provide proponent testimony toward House Bill No. 358 to enact Section 5.293 of the Revised Code to designate the seventeenth day of August as "Eugene 'Gene' F. Kranz Day."

The state of Ohio has a proud history and heritage related to aviation and aerospace. The Wright Brothers not only designed and built the first powered aircraft in Dayton, but also learned the critical skills of controlled flight in the same area. Ohio boasts 25 astronauts who were born or spent formative years in our state, including the first human to walk on the Moon, Neil Armstrong. But perhaps no Ohioan has had a more substantial role in this nation's ongoing success in space than Eugene F. 'Gene' Kranz. Born in Toledo in 1933, Kranz graduated from Toledo Central Catholic High school and earned his degree in aeronautical engineering from Parks College of the University of St. Louis. After a stint in the USAF flying jet fighters along the Korean DMZ, Kranz returned to St. Louis, where he helped test missiles for the McDonnell Aircraft Corp.

In 1960, when our nation's space program was barely two years old, Kranz answered an ad for a position NASA had advertised in Aviation Week magazine. His first assignment at NASA Langley in Virginia was to help write procedures for spaceflights; talk about pioneering! By 1964 his competence and dedication throughout the successful missions of Project Mercury had earned him promotion to Flight Director, for Gemini then Apollo missions. Success or failure rode largely on each decision Kranz would make, or would fail to make.

In the aftermath of the horrific Apollo 1 fire, Kranz ramped-up Mission Control's performance and accountability. He coined the phrase 'tough and competent,' established this as a formal motto, and drilled it into his staff with relentless determination.

During two missions in particular, Apollo 11, the historic first attempt to land on the Moon, and the highly complex, challenging, and risky rescue of Apollo 13, the unflappable Kranz and his skilled team maintained cool heads and calm control of every facet and phase of each flight. Kranz has referred to the massive effort to safely return Apollo 13's crew to Earth as 'NASA's finest hour' and it is hard to argue with that sentiment.

We feel that the standards that Kranz set, for himself and everyone around him, helped to ensure the eventual success of all programs with which he was involved – Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, Skylab, and the Shuttle. It is fitting for all Ohioans, and indeed all Americans, to remember and be inspired by the dedication and achievements of Gene Kranz!

Sincerely,



Dante Centuori  
Executive Director  
Armstrong Air & Space Museum