

Alabama Stars Shine Brightly at AIAA Spotlight Awards Dinner

Article by Robert La Branche, Public Policy Director

On June 15, 2016, AIAA held its Spotlight Awards Gala at the Ronald Regan Building and International Trade Center in Washington D.C. This black tie event celebrates the very best of the aeronautics and astronautics profession. The Greater Huntsville Section was well represented, taking home the Public Service Award and adding two Fellows to the roster.



Marshall Space Flight Center Director Todd May with 2016 Public Service Award Winner Alabama Lieutenant Governor Kay Ivey

Among the awardees celebrated was Public Service Award winner, Alabama Lieutenant Governor Kay Ivey, our Section's nominee. This auspicious awards, which honors aerospace advocates outside the industry, has been given to supporters like Neil deGrasse Tyson, Walter Cronkite, and Gene Rodenberry. Greater Huntsville Section Public Policy Director Robert La Branche was honored to nominate her for the Public Service Award. Her nomination packet was supported by letters of recommendation from Congressman Mo Brooks (R-AL-05); Mr. Todd May and Mr. Patrick Scheuermann, the current and then Directors of Marshall Space Flight Center; Dr. Deborah Barnhart, CEO of the U.S. Space and Rocket Center; Mark Whorton, AIAA Region II Director; and Dr. Kurt Polzin, then Greater Huntsville Section Chairman. Lieutenant Governor Ivey was selected "For public service as a distinguished leader and stalwart supporter of the aerospace industry and profession in Alabama and throughout the nation."

She has shown a steadfast commitment for national aviation and space goals, and has appreciably enhanced the aerospace industry in Alabama and throughout the nation. Lieutenant Governor Ivey's career has spanned the public and private sectors. She has served as Alabama's Lieutenant Governor since 2011 and previously served as the State's Treasurer. She is an exemplary leader who has worked tirelessly to promote the aerospace profession.

Lieutenant Governor Ivey has a demonstrated commitment to both civil and defense aerospace and has distinguished herself as a leader in the community. She currently serves as the national chairman of the Aerospace States Association (ASA), a non-partisan organization of Lieutenant Governors that represents states' interests in federal aerospace and aviation policy development. ASA advocates on behalf of all 50 states for research and design funding; workforce training; economic development in aerospace and aviation; science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education; and keeping states competitive in a global marketplace. In this role, she leads Lieutenant Governors throughout the nation in stimulating the economy through the aerospace industry.



AIAA Greater Huntsville Public Policy Director and Nominator Robert La Branche with Lieutenant Governor Ivey

"I was truly honored to accept the 2016 AIAA Public Service Award. It is a huge honor to join this distinguished group. The aerospace industry is not only important to Alabama but to our nation. I am proud to have a part in advancing the aerospace industry. Promoting STEM education through our partners in aerospace is vital for preparing the future workforce," said Lt. Governor Kay Ivey.

We also had two Greater Huntsville Section members, Mark Whorton and Steve Cook, honored at this year's Gala for attaining the rank of AIAA Fellow. Fellows are individuals of distinction in aeronautics or astronautics who have made notable valuable contributions to the arts, sciences, or technology of aeronautics or astronautics. There were twenty-five total fellows awarded this year.



AIAA Fellow Mark Whorton

Mark Whorton served until very recently as Chief Technologist at Teledyne Brown Engineering, and starts this month as the Executive Director of the University of Tennessee Space Institute (UTSI). Founded in 1964, UTSI is a graduate education and research institution located in Middle Tennessee adjacent to the U. S. Air Force Arnold Engineering Development Center.

Steve Cook currently serves as Vice President for Corporate Development at Dynetics, Inc. and is serving as Acting President for Dynetics Technical Services, a wholly owned subsidiary of Dynetics Inc. Dynetics, Inc. is one of the top 25 largest privately owned businesses in the State of Alabama. Prior to working for Dynetics, Steve spent over 20 years at Marshall Space Flight Center, culminating his NASA career as Manager of the Ares Projects.



Lieutenant Governor Ivey with AIAA Fellow Steve Cook

It was a momentous evening for our Section. In addition to the aforementioned awards, AIAA bestowed the following awards to these individuals: [AIAA Foundation Award for Excellence](#), Gen. John R. "Jack" Dailey, U.S. Marine Corps (ret.), National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution; [Goddard Astronautics Award](#), Wanda M. Austin, The Aerospace Corporation; [Reed Aeronautics Award](#), Earl Dowell, Duke University; [International Cooperation Award](#), Simonetta Di Pippo, United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs; [Distinguished Service Award](#), Thomas Crouch, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution; [Daniel Guggenheim Medal](#), Antony Jameson, Stanford University.