

**Inauguration of the Eddie Bernice Johnson Lecture Series in Science and Technology by Professor Betty Pace of UTD on October 13, 2003 in the Metroplex**

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Dear Congresswoman Johnson:

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate you for allowing your good name to be leveraged in setting up this exciting lecture series. As you have envisioned, these lectures will be held in a Metroplex high school and whenever it is technically possible, will be broadcast to high schools of other regions.

As you have so elegantly articulated, our nation's global leadership depends on its ability to innovate scientifically and technologically. It is self evident that this is a central ingredient to ensure the nation remains competitive in, if not leading, the global economy. To this end, there is a dangerous signal that our nation is heading towards a serious shortage of highly qualified scientific and technological brain power. In fact, I learned recently that within the next several years, one of the leading national laboratories will retire many hundreds of highly skilled scientists and engineers, and replacing those individuals will be very difficult, if not nearly impossible.

Of course, to meet this challenge, the nation needs to reach out to all communities, especially those which are currently under-represented in the science and technology fields. This is certainly an arduous task because reaching out means starting at the beginning, namely at the elementary, secondary and high school level, and work not only with students in schools, but with their parents and the community leaders as well.

It is for this reason that the establishment of the Eddie Bernice Johnson Lecture Series, to be held in a high school in Dallas, is both timely and urgent. As you have directed, high school students, their parents and community leaders will all be invited to these lectures.

I am extremely pleased that one of our most distinguished young faculty members, Professor Betty Pace -- an expert in unlocking the terrible disease of sickle cell anemia and who was recently rated by Popular Science Magazine as one of the 10 most brilliant scientists nationwide -- will be the inaugural lecturer.

Congresswoman Johnson, we all know that to reach out to the underrepresented communities in science and technology cannot be accomplished by one lecture alone. It is for this reason we are grateful that you had the vision and the tenacity to make it a series. I am quite confident that through these lectures, we can find ways to motivate and organize the communities to collectively solve this national crisis.