“Honoring the Past. Powering the Future.”

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 10/13/2026

A SHARED COMMITMENT: HONORING DR. ELBERT FRANK COX

MathSTEM’s journey began with a collaborative effort to honor the legacy of Dr. Elbert Frank Cox, the first Black person in the world to earn a PhD in mathematics. A reminder, shared by Howard University faculty, resurfaced the fact that Dr. Cox had never been inducted into Phi Beta Kappa (PBK) during his lifetime. A detail documented in historical sources such as the James Donaldson-Richard J. Fleming manuscript and supported by an archival reference from Cornell University. This revelation highlighted an important gap in the historical record and underscored the significance of acknowledging his contributions to mathematics education, the grading scale system, Howard University’s Mathematics Master’s and Ph.D. programs, the Dr. Elbert Frank Cox Math Competition, and the scholarship and endowment established in his name.

As this fact unfolded, the Cox family was contacted by Howard University faculty, Morgan State University, National Association of Mathematicians (NAM), and PBK, each expressing interest in honoring Dr. Cox’s legacy through ceremony, art, and academic recognition. These touchpoints created a natural alignment between PBK’s desire to acknowledge his impact and MathSTEM’s mission to steward legacy with integrity.

What began as historical research evolved into a shared commitment to celebrate Dr. Cox’s enduring influence on mathematics, education, and generations of scholars. This collaboration reflects MathSTEM’s broader purpose: elevating truth in academic history and expanding equitable STEM pathways for young learners.

Event Details

This historic occasion honoring Dr. Elbert Frank Cox will take place on November 13, 2026, in the Glover Park Room at the Dupont Circle Hotel in Washington, D.C. Presented by Phi Beta Kappa in collaboration with the Cox family and MathSTEM, the program will include lunch, a honorary posthumous induction into the Society, a keynote tribute, and a short commemorative film highlighting Dr. Cox’s enduring impact on mathematics and STEM education. Attendees can expect a thoughtful, historically grounded event designed to honor his legacy with dignity, accuracy, and inspiration.

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