

PRESS RELEASE
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NASA Pioneer Colonel Eileen Collins to Speak at Houston International Maritime Conference

First woman to pilot and command a U.S. spacecraft will take the HIMC26 stage November 4

HOUSTON, Texas, October 26, 2026 — Houston's connection to space exploration will take center stage at the Houston International Maritime Conference ([HIMC26](#)), where NASA pioneer Col. Eileen Collins will speak Wednesday morning, November 4, adding another dimension to a program focused on leadership, innovation and the forces shaping the future of global commerce.

Col. Collins, the first woman to pilot and command an American spacecraft, comes to HIMC as space exploration enters an exciting new era, with growing commercial activity and renewed attention on what lies ahead. Her appearance is particularly fitting in Houston, home to NASA's Johnson Space Center and a city with a history deeply connected to the U.S. space program.

"Houston has always been a city that looks toward what's next, and Eileen Collins represents that spirit of exploration and innovation," said Charlie Jenkins, CEO, Port Houston. "Her experiences breaking barriers, leading teams and navigating extraordinarily complex missions offer lessons that will resonate with our HIMC audience."

Col. Collins made history in 1995 when she became the first woman to pilot a U.S. spacecraft aboard Space Shuttle Discovery. In 1999, she became the first woman to command a Space Shuttle mission, and

in 2005, NASA selected her to command Discovery's historic "Return to Flight" mission following the loss of Columbia. Over her NASA career, Col. Collins logged 872 hours in space.

Drawing on those experiences, Col. Collins speaks about leadership, teamwork, breaking barriers and performing in dynamic environments, while also sharing her perspective on the future of space exploration. Her career and achievements were recently chronicled in the 2026 documentary *Spacewoman*.

Presented by Port Houston, HIMC26 will take place November 2–5 at the Hilton Americas in Houston, bringing together leaders from maritime, transportation, energy, logistics and global trade to exchange ideas, explore issues shaping the industry and build valuable relationships. The conference reflects Port Houston's role as advocate and strategic leader for the Houston Ship Channel and provides four days of industry insight and extensive networking opportunities.

This year's conference, themed "Lessons from the past. Strategies for the future," will bring together executives, policymakers and industry leaders from Houston and around the world for discussions on the issues shaping global trade, including Panama Canal developments, the impact of geopolitics, import and export perspectives, the ocean carrier market and innovations in resins trade, while providing valuable opportunities to exchange ideas, strengthen relationships and connect with customers, colleagues and industry decision makers.

Register today and explore sponsorship opportunities designed to increase brand visibility and engagement throughout the conference by visiting www.porthouston.com/himc.

About Port Houston

For more than 100 years, Port Houston has owned and operated the public wharves and terminals along the Houston Ship Channel, including the area's largest breakbulk facility and two of the most efficient container terminals in the country. Port Houston is the advocate and a strategic leader for the Houston Ship Channel region known as the Port of Houston, which includes more than 200 private and eight public facilities. The Port of Houston is the nation's largest port for waterborne tonnage and an essential economic engine for the Houston region, the state of Texas and the U.S. The Port of Houston supports approximately 1.89 million jobs in Texas and 3.53 million jobs nationwide and economic activity totaling \$538 billion in Texas and \$987 billion across the nation. For more information, visit PortHouston.com.