

Governor Jeff Colyer, M.D.
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2 September 2020

The Honorable David Bernhardt
Secretary of the US Department of Interior
US Department of Interior
1849 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Bernhardt,

As the former Governor of Kansas, I wanted to respond to your national request for nominations and feedback for the National Garden of American Heroes. In these tough times it is important to take a minute and think about what makes America better everyday. The United States was built by ordinary Americans who achieved extraordinary things even in the most difficult times. The Kansas motto is Ad Astra Per Aspera or To the Stars Through Difficulty. Kansas is the true heart of America, and every Kansan honors the sacrifice men and women have made to make this a better world. I think it is very thoughtful of you to reach out to every state and governor asking for their feedback on how to best honor people of every color and creed who have sacrificed for our beloved country. While I may no longer officially speak for the people of Kansas, I know the love and patriotism that all Kansans carry in our hearts.

As for your first question of potential locations, there are several options within Kansas, the geographic center of the nation, to place the Garden of American Heroes on federal property. The first option is the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve in the Flint Hills. It is the last stand of tall grass that once covered more than 170 million acres of the U.S.the original Garden of America. The wide-open vistas and beautiful landscape would be an excellent home for Americas heroes. Nearby is the Milken Museum of

Unsung Heroes which was inspired by young Kansans to celebrate heroes that history may have forgotten. Another option is the federal property at Fort Leavenworth, beautifully sited near Kansas City and the Missouri River where Lewis and Clark camped and the Buffalo Soldiers are honored. Recently the federal government announced plans to close the architecturally magnificent Leavenworth Penitentiary buildings and consider it as a site for a museum. The grand buildings would be a complement for the gorgeous grounds nearby.

I am no longer in a position to answer the question of whether there are statues the state could lend to this endeavor. That being said, the first bill I signed placed a striking statue of General Eisenhower on our Capitol grounds as a reminder of our Kansas heroes who built America. A quick check revealed that the mold of Eisenhowers statue in the US Capitol may be available to recast for the Garden, and that private funds should be available. Working with Kansass sculptors, proud Kansans, and the Historical Society it should be possible to acquire fitting tributes to great Americans such as Amelia Earhart, President Eisenhower, the Brown Family and other appropriate Kansans. The reminder of our better angels is something many will support.

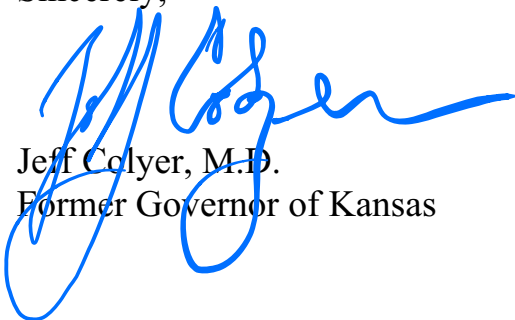
As for appropriate Kansans known and unknown there are too many to list here. I would recommend working with the Kansas Historical Society and the Milken Center for Unsung Heroes to come up with a final list. Some notable Kansans to consider include:

- President Dwight Eisenhower military leader of our victory in WWII and as President created the Interstate Highway system, NASA, fought the early battle for civil rights, and ended the Korean War.
- Amelia Earhart-aviator and explorer already listed on the original roster.
- the Buffalo Soldiers who served on the Western frontier and are celebrated with a statue at Fort Leavenworth.
- Buffalo Bill Cody and Wild Bill Hickok who helped open the American west.
- Vice President Charles Curtismember of the Kaw nation and the first Native American to reach the one of the two highest offices of the US.
- Susana Madora Salter who was the first woman elected to political office (mayor) in the U.S.
- the Exodusters brave Black Americans who migrated west after the civil war.

--Fr. Emil Kapaun a prisoner of war gave up his food and life to spiritually help American prisoners in Korea. He is on the first steps to sainthood.
--Jack Kilby inventor of the first transistor, which powers the modern world.
--Martha Farnsworth, Kansas suffragist.
--Dr. Joseph Crumrine, early public health advocate.
--The Brown Family, Thurgood Marshall, and Topeka families who fought the segregation of schools and ultimately won the landmark Brown v. Board of Education in the US Supreme Court. I helped dedicate a mural to their sacrifice in the state Capitol.
--Clyde Cessna who made personal air travel accessible.
--Dr. James Naismith the creator of basketball (and his handwritten first rules of basketball are displayed in Kansas).
--George Mallon, a Medal of Honor winner for his sacrifices in WWI.
--Laura Cobb a nurse who was imprisoned for three years in WWII after the fall of Bataan.
--George Brett baseball legend and all around great Kansan.
--Bob Dole wounded WWII veteran, leading Senator who helped pass such landmarks as Americans with Disabilities Act, Food Stamps, and others.
--George Washington Carver the son of slaves who became a leading scientist and innovator.
--Clyde Tombaugh who discovered Pluto.
--Satanta Native American leader respected by all.

Kansans are proud of Americas heritage. We help our neighbors and respect those who sacrificed so much for our children. We thank you for considering the many contributions of Kansans like Amelia Earhart, the Brown family and Dwight Eisenhower. Their legacies can help bring all of us together.

Sincerely,



Jeff Colyer, M.D.
Former Governor of Kansas