



J. Kevin Stitt
Office of the Governor
State of Oklahoma

August 13, 2020

The Honorable David Bernhardt
Secretary of the Interior

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The State of Oklahoma has a long history of being a home to American heroes who played pivotal roles throughout not only Oklahoma's history, but the nation's as well. Please let this letter serve as the response to your July 21, 2020, letter requesting recommendations regarding the National Garden of American Heroes.

The State of Oklahoma would like to suggest two potential locations within the state which may best match the description of preferred sites.

1. Lake Thunderbird State Park
 - a. The park is currently owned by the United States Bureau of Reclamation and is leased to the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department. The park is located just east of Norman, Oklahoma, and roughly forty miles from the Will Rogers World Airport of Oklahoma City. The park is comprised of 1,874 acres surrounding Lake Thunderbird. From December through February, American bald eagles can be found residing around the lake as part of their migratory pattern.
2. Lake Keystone
 - a. Lake Keystone sits just west of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and is 30 miles from the Tulsa International Airport. Several areas around the lake are currently owned by the United States Army Corps of Engineers. The lake features several of recreational areas operated by either the United State Army Corps of Engineers or the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department.

The state is currently unaware of any available statues or memorials that would be responsive to the requirements set forth in your letter and the Executive Order.

Oklahoma has long produced heroes that exemplify the traits set forth in President Trump's Executive Order. In addition to the heroes listed, Oklahoma would like to offer the following Oklahomans for consideration:

1. Wilma Pearl Mankiller (1945-2010)
 - a. Wilma Mankiller was the first woman elected as chief of a major American Indian tribe after the dawn of tribal sovereignty in the 1970s. Born into a large Cherokee family that was encouraged by federal policy to relocate to San Francisco to “escape” the traditional life of her people, she returned to Oklahoma, where her sense of community service and tribal traditions placed her in a position to lead the struggle against poverty, prejudice, and limited opportunities for future generations. Late in life, she shared her compassion on the world stage as a member of the Ford Foundation board of directors.
2. William Penn Adair Rogers (1879-1935)
 - a. Will Rogers, a Cherokee cowboy born in 1879, was a rare combination of entertainer, folk philosopher, and humanitarian who represented the best of the American spirit for more than 30 years on stage, in films, on radio, and in the press. He gained fame around the globe and spoke at both Republican and Democratic conventions. He set the standard for political commentary infused with humor that pulled people together and reminded everyone that sometimes we need to laugh at ourselves.
3. James Francis Thorpe (1888-1953)
 - a. Jim Thorpe, a Sac and Fox/Pottawatomie citizen, has repeatedly been voted as the Outstanding American Athlete of the 20th Century. Despite the hardships of his youth, when government policy was to “kill the Indian to save the Indian,” he used his skills and talent to win ribbons and championships in sports. He won two gold medals in track at the 1912 Olympics, played both professional baseball and football, and was the first president of the National Football League.
4. John Hope Franklin (1915-2009)
 - a. Dr. John Hope Franklin, the grandson of a freed Chickasaw African American slave, overcame prejudice and racial injustice in his native Tulsa to become the first African American scholar to receive a Ph.D. in History from Harvard. As a young professor, he was asked by a national publisher to write the first comprehensive history of the African-American experience. That textbook, *From Slavery to Freedom*, has since sold more than six million copies. During the Civil Rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s, Dr. Franklin was a constant source of facts needed at a time of emotional turmoil.
5. Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher (1924-1995)
 - a. Oklahoma Civil Rights activist Ada Lois Sipuel was born February 8, 1924, in Chickasha, Oklahoma. On May 21, 1945, Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher graduated from Langston University with honors and her dream set on becoming a lawyer. On January 14, 1946, Fisher applied to the University of Oklahoma College of Law and was denied admittance due to segregation laws. Fisher spent the next three-and-a-half years fighting all the way up to the United States Supreme Court to

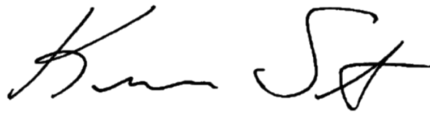
gain admission, which she received in 1949. In August 1952, Fisher graduated from the University of Oklahoma College of Law. In 1991, the University of Oklahoma awarded Fisher an honorary doctorate of humane letters. On April 22, 1992, Gov. David Walters appointed Dr. Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher to the Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma, the same school that had once refused to admit her to its College of Law.

6. Wiley Hardeman Post (1898-1935)

- a. Wiley Post, the son of cotton sharecroppers in southern Oklahoma, became one of the world's most famous aviators when he became the first person to circumnavigate the globe in an airplane. He accomplished that feat with a navigator in 1931 and then solo in 1933. Other accomplishments included the invention of the first high-altitude pressure suit, discovery of the stratosphere and jet stream, and several speed and distance records set in his celebrated Lockheed Vega, the Winnie Mae.

The State of Oklahoma looks forward to assisting you and the Commission in moving forward with the National Garden of American Heroes. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have further questions or would like to discuss any of Oklahoma's recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Stitt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and a stylized "S".

J. Kevin Stitt
Governor of the State of Oklahoma