



U.S. PATENT & TRADEMARK OFFICE MILITARY ASSOCIATION



Summer 2024

The USPTO commemorates Memorial Day

On May 23, the USPTO Military Association (UMA) hosted its annual Memorial Day program honoring fallen service members. Guest speakers included Fred Steckler, USPTO Chief Administrative Officer and UMA Executive Sponsor; Jamie Holcome, USPTO Chief Information Officer; Bismarck Myrick, Director of the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity; and Deputy Director of the USPTO Derrick Brent. Special presentations were made by the Patenters chorus, who sang the National Anthem; Ivana Miranda, who sang "America the Beautiful"; and Michael Argüello, who presented a poem.

Although morning rain prevented the walk to the Alexandria National Cemetery, UMA president Robin Hylton offered the following history of the final resting place of more than 4,000 individuals:

"Alexandria was one of the principal campsites for Union soldiers sent to defend Washington, D.C., at the outbreak of the Civil War. [...] As the tide of the war turned, especially after Gettysburg, the frontlines of the war moved west and away from Washington, D.C. The fortress area of Alexandria, however, continued to serve as a major supply and replacement center throughout the remainder of the war.

Alexandria National Cemetery is one of the original 14 national cemeteries established in 1862. The first burials made in the cemetery were soldiers who died during training or from disease in the numerous hospitals around Alexandria."

Note: Read a feature on the history of Memorial Day on [page 8](#). Photos this page by Jay Premack/USPTO.



CONTINUING TO SERVE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NSBE/UMA Mock Interviews

Want to practice your interview skills for a future detail or managerial position? If you are interested in signing up for a mock interview with 3 panelists, be one of the first 25 NSBE or UMA members to fill out the [application](#) by close of business June 7.

June 14th Event

Join us as we celebrate **Flag Day** and the **Army's birthday** with an event in the Jefferson Conference Room at noon ET. Happy hour to follow later in the day.

Want to help plan future service branch birthday celebrations? [Email us!](#)

For the past UMA Coffee Break schedule, go [here](#). To receive an invite to the weekly UMA Coffee Break chats, email UMA@uspto.gov.

CONNECT WITH US

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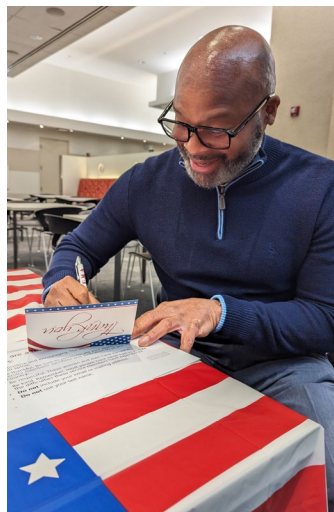


UMA letter writing campaign at the Military Entrepreneurship Summit

By Elizabeth Caraway, *UMA Secretary*

The Military Entrepreneurship Summit in April was an opportunity for area veterans to learn from intellectual property experts, and it was also an opportunity for the UMA to encourage people to write cards of gratitude for active duty service members. An additional day in May offered USPTO colleagues the chance to stop by and pen a few words of thanks. Spearheaded by UMA member Angela Jenkins, the campaign resulted in 64 handwritten cards and 3 emailed letters that will be distributed to those serving overseas.

(Photos by Angela Jenkins and Elizabeth Caraway/USPTO)



Women veteran entrepreneurs share during Women’s History Month

By Elizabeth Caraway, UMA Secretary

On March 25, the UMA hosted a “We Can Do It! Women Veteran Entrepreneurs” panel discussion at the Alexandria campus. The showcase was an inspiring display of expertise, resilience, and innovation.

Our thanks go out to (from left) Angela Jenkins (moderator), Christy Carsner, Melody Gratic, and Evelyn Waite, as well as organizer Britainy Riggins.

Not only did the women address the challenges they encountered while serving in the military, but also the challenges they encountered while starting and running their businesses.

Support their women veteran businesses:

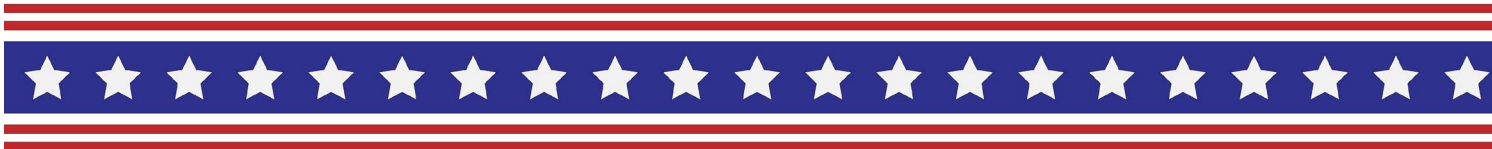
[Moonlit Cards and a Whole Lot More](#)

[XcelMil Consulting LLC](#)

[ELW Initiative](#)



(Photo by Robin Hylton/USPTO)



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The Scuttlebutt is produced with volunteer hours and may include stories, links, and references not directly connected to the USPTO Military Association, but which may be of interest to our veteran community. If you have questions or comments about any of the newsletter content, please contact us at uma@uspto.gov. We appreciate feedback as we strive to offer the best possible product to our members.



My experience as a military child

By Ephraim Blair, UMA Youth Communications Apprentice

April is the [month of the military child](#), which makes it an appropriate time to share my personal experience. Being a military child has impacted my life in innumerable ways and has shaped who I am. Many difficulties came along with being a military child. Still, many more opportunities and chances for growth came about because my father was in the Navy.

The most obvious challenge about being a military child is moving; the United States Navy has determined every city where I have lived. In 2009, I was born at Bethesda Naval Hospital (now Walter Reed National Military Medical Center), also known as the President's Hospital, to my wonderful parents in Bethesda, Maryland because my father was a military doctor stationed there. The first couple years of my life in Maryland were great, but nothing particularly remarkable happened, or, at least, nothing I can remember in great detail that would be germane to this article. I just grew up happily as any baby or toddler would.

Then, the Navy determined that my father was to go through flight training in Pensacola, Florida. So we, as a family, ended up there. I was very young then, so moving was an odd experience, but I enjoyed Pensacola. However, my mother, who worked for the United States Patent and Trademark Office, had to commute by flight to Alexandria almost every week for several days on end. It was tough having my mother gone often, but this was the life that my father signed up for the family. Even though my mother was often away during the week, she would be home on weekends, and we would try to spend as much time together as possible. After going to preschool and kindergarten, I made friends at school and in my neighborhood. I had become acclimated and accustomed to the Florida panhandle and especially loved the weather. The beaches were great too.

After my father finished his flight training, he was stationed on the USS Abraham Lincoln, a nuclear aircraft carrier in the yards in Newport News, Virginia as the Senior Medical Officer (SMO). I was saddened that I had to leave friends and Pensacola, but duty was calling. We had no choice but to move, and we settled in Virginia Beach. In my father's new position, he would often have to work long hours on the ship because he was responsible for the health and safety of the 5,000 crew members of the Lincoln. A few times, he was deployed on the Lincoln,

which had left the yards and returned to its homeport of Norfolk, Virginia. I started first grade in a new school where I knew no one. Yet, I made friends quickly; I felt it was a necessity to try to make friends as I had in Pensacola because, if I did not try, I would be miserable.

My father finished his time on the Lincoln and was re-stationed to Portsmouth Naval Hospital, which was in the same general area, so we did not have to move. He completed his last few years in the Navy there as a physician seeing patients, which he has always loved to do. Yet, in 2020, the year he was to retire from the Navy, the COVID-19 Pandemic struck. This meant he would often have to work even longer hours than he usually would have. Despite the global pandemic, my father still retired from the Navy on schedule in October 2020.

“*Seeing and experiencing the sacrifice that ensures our freedom, I have developed a deep love and appreciation for American values and principles.*”

My experience as a military child has been such an integral part of my life that I do not stop and think about my upbringing very often. It just is a fact of my life. Yet, every time I think about my experience, I realize how much I loved it and how important it was. It has given me new opportunities like writing these articles for the USPTO Military Organization, but, more importantly, it has shaped my outlook on the world. Seeing and experiencing the sacrifice that ensures our freedom, I have developed a deep love and appreciation for American values and principles. Without our servicemen and women in uniform, we would cease to be a free nation, but you must always remember that behind every Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Marine, and Guardian, there is a military parent, spouse, and/or child.



UMA Youth Communications Apprentice Ephraim Blair, son of April and Jeffrey Blair, is an eighth grader in Virginia Beach, VA. Ephraim was born in Walter Reed Military Hospital and his father was a Navy active duty medical officer. He is interested in history, politics, and economics. He loves activities such as reading, writing, debating, and playing golf. He is planning on pursuing a career in law and politics.

UMA celebrates success, looks to future at quarterly meeting

By Elizabeth Caraway, UMA Secretary

The UMA quarterly membership meeting met March 21 in the Clara Barton Auditorium of the Madison building. Members were also able to attend the meeting virtually.

During the meeting, members were able to hear from Bismarck Myrick, the USPTO Director of the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity, as well as USPTO Chief Administrative Officer and UMA Executive Sponsor Fred Steckler. Both senior leaders highlighted the importance of the UMA and all agency voluntary employee organizations while working within a geographically distributed workforce.

UMA members also heard about past accomplishments from past president Alford Kindred, future plans from current president Robin Hylton, UMA communications efforts from secretary Elizabeth Caraway, and the treasurer's report from Christian Laureano-DeJesus.

A social hour at Foster's Grille, one of the best attended in recent history, followed the meeting.



Members of UMA pose in front of the flags during the Quarterly meeting March 21. Below, (from left) Fred Steckler, Bismarck Myrick, and Robin Hylton address the in-person and virtual attendees. (Photos by Jay Premack/USPTO)



Who We Are

The USPTO Military Association (UMA) is a USPTO affinity group and 501(c)(3) non-profit charity with a mission to provide **fellowship, mentorship, and support** for military veterans working at the USPTO and to help educate others on the important contributions that veterans have made—and continue to make—to the workforce and our nation. Membership is open to everyone and prior military service is not required. Contact the UMA for more information or to join (it only takes one short form) at uma@uspto.gov.



Photos from around the military services

ARMY



A paratrooper in the 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Utah National Guard, and a service member from the 2e Brigade d'infanterie Parachutiste, Morocco Royal Armed Forces, carry a parachute off the drop zone during a combined airborne exercise as part of African Lion 2024 (AL24), near Ben Guerir, Morocco, May 20, 2024. African Lion 2024 (AL24) marks the 20th anniversary of U.S. Africa Command's premier joint exercise led by U.S. Army Southern European Task Force, Africa (SETAF-AF), running across Ghana, Morocco, Senegal and Tunisia, with over 8,100 participants from 27 nations and NATO contingents. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jake Seawolf)

AIR FORCE



An HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter assigned to the 101st Rescue Squadron and an HC-130J Combat King II search and rescue aircraft assigned to the 102nd Rescue Squadron at the 106th Rescue Wing, demonstrates mid-air refueling at the Bethpage Air Show at Jones Beach, Wantagh, N.Y., May 25, 2024. This year is the 20th Anniversary of the Bethpage Air Show. (Photo by U.S. Air Force National Guard Photo by Capt. Cheran Campbell)

MARINE CORPS



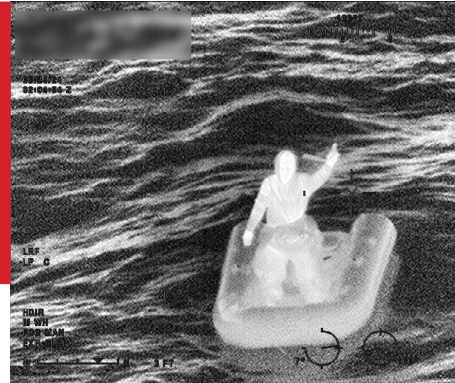
Pfc. Luis Armasbalserio, an M3E1 multipurpose anti-armor anti-personnel weapon system gunner with Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment (Reinforced), Marine Rotational Force - Darwin 24.3, runs to a firing position during a squad attack range as a part of Exercise Predators Walk at Mount Bunday Training Area, NT, Australia, May 22, 2024. During Predators Walk, Marines were able to conduct a live-fire squad range further developing the skills and confidence needed to succeed at the small unit level. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Juan Torres)

SPACE FORCE



From the left, U.S. Space Force Spc. 3 Rikkey Apineru, 72nd Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Squadron expeditionary ISR technician, and USSF Sgt. Daniel Watts, 72nd ISRS lead expeditionary ISR technician, set up antennas for a readiness exercise at Peterson Space Force Base, Colorado, May 8, 2024. In alignment with the Space Force Generation model, the exercise focused on practicing mission-essential tasks, training Guardians in a low-threat environment and validating unit readiness for deployments. (Photo by Keefer Patterson, U.S. Space Force)

COAST GUARD



A 58-year-old man on a 9-foot dingy waves at Coast Guard Air Station Elizabeth City rescue aircrews as they arrive on scene after receiving a 406-megahertz Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon alert May 23, 2024, 60 miles east of Chincoteague, Virginia. The mariner had abandoned his 45-foot sailboat, Trilogy, after it caught fire while he was transiting from the Bahamas to New Jersey. (Photo courtesy of Coast Guard Air Station Elizabeth City)

NAVY



Operations Specialist 2nd Class Christopher Ignacio, from Ventura, California, looks through a telescopic alidade in the pilot house aboard the U.S. Navy's only forward-deployed aircraft carrier, USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76), in the Philippine Sea, May 27. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jordan Brown)

*All photos this page are courtesy of the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service (DVIDS)

There I was...

Please email your, or your family member's, veteran, civil service, or patriotic high-resolution photos, original art, or short poetry to uma@uspto.gov. Note that submission constitutes your approval for UMA to share the content in the newsletter and on social media and the editorial team reserves the right to approve or deny content. Have A LOT of creativity to share? Consider contributing to [Veterans' Voices](#), which publishes veteran prose, poetry, and art.



Congratulations on your USPTO retirement, Alec Levy!

Alexander (Alec) Levy's last day with the USPTO may have been May 31, 2024, but we are commemorating our former colleague's retirement from civil service by taking a look back at his military service.

Clockwise from upper left: ENS Levy during first deployment on USS Enterprise (CVN 65) on the flight deck somewhere in the Pacific or Indian Oceans, 1988. Top center photo: ENS Levy during first deployment on USS Enterprise (CVN 65), Supply Department Officers and Chiefs, 1988. Top right: CDR Levy, predeployment training, McCrady Training Center, SC, January 2008. Bottom left: LCDR Levy during a cargo handling operation loading Army vehicles on a ship at Pearl Harbor, HI, headed to the Middle East, December 2003. Bottom center: LCDR Levy deployed to Kuwait but on a trip to Balad AB, Iraq, 2005. Bottom right: CDR Levy retirement ceremony, National Reconnaissance Office, April, 2013. (Courtesy photos from Alexander Levy)



The history of Memorial Day

By Ephraim Blair, UMA Youth Communications Apprentice

“That Nation which respects and honors its dead shall [for]ever be respected and honored itself.”¹

– Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Edmund Burke Whitman, 1868

Every year on the last Monday in May, Americans commemorate Memorial Day, a federal holiday, to mourn and pay homage to all those who have died in the armed forces of America. Yet behind Memorial Day, there is a lot of history to be learned and uncovered.

Ever since the American Revolution, there have always been ways to honor those who died in service to their nation, its independence, and the freedom it protects and represents, but no formal holiday came about until the Civil War Era. Post-Civil War, all sorts of communities across America paid homage to their fallen soldiers by praying for the deceased soldiers and decorating their graves with flowers, a custom dating back to Roman times. Yet, there was no singular unifying date; different families and communities honored their dead on completely different days throughout the year.

Then the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), a strong lobbying organization made up of Civil War veterans led by General John Alexander Logan, with their General Order 11, officially recognized a day of memorial on May 30, 1868. This day was to be known as Decoration Day as it was a day designated for visiting the graves of the dead and decorating them with flowers. May 30th was chosen because GAR thought that was when flowers would be in bloom all across the country.² On that day, the first national Decoration Day ceremony was held at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, which had formerly been the home of General Robert E. Lee. The ceremony paid homage to the approximately 11,250 Union soldiers, 350 Confederate troops, and 2,111 unidentified remains of soldiers who were buried as “unknowns” several decades before the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was erected. The event was headlined by remarks delivered by General, Congressman, and future President James A. Garfield and included “prayers, dirges, hymns, recitation of the Gettysburg Address and G[eneral].O[rder]. 11, and [a] playing [of] the ‘Star-Spangled Banner.’” After the ceremony, people went around the entire cemetery to lay flowers at the graves.

Even though General Logan’s order, General Order No. 11, formally solidified the place of Decoration Day, there were many lobbying efforts before that. Notably, in 1866, women in Columbus, Ohio, lobbied for a unified, set date

for everyone in the country to pay respect and decorate the graves of their Civil War dead over two years before GAR issued their Decoration Day Order. Yet, even the ladies of Columbus were not the first to hold some type of day of memorial; smaller events in memoriam of soldiers and sailors who perished took place during the waning days of the Civil War.³



In the following two or so decades, towns, cities, and localities, mostly in the North, began to follow GAR’s lead and began to propose and pass resolutions adopting Decoration Day as a holiday. By 1890, all states that had been a part of the Union during the Civil War had officially adopted Decoration Day as a holiday, but a new name for the holiday began to spring up and started to become popular: Memorial Day. The new name, Memorial Day, especially gained popularity after two bloody, devastating World Wars and several smaller conflicts; it became clear that it was time to broaden Decoration Day to make it a time to honor all who perished in the line of duty, not just some of them, i.e. those who died during the Civil War.⁴

On May 11, 1950, Congress passed a joint resolution declaring and designating May 30th as Memorial Day; it was meant to be a day to pay “tribute to those who lost their lives in war... [and] as a day for Nation-wide prayer for permanent peace.” They also “requested that the President issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe Memorial Day in that manner.” President Harry S. Truman signed the legislation and became the first president to issue a Memorial Day proclamation as president on May 22, 1950. Every single president since then has made an annual Memorial Day proclamation.⁵

In 1966, President Lyndon Baines Johnson, spurred by a congressional resolution, declared the year as the centennial of Memorial Day for it had first been celebrated in Waterloo, New York, on May 30, 1866.⁶ President Johnson also signed the Uniform Monday Holiday Act in 1968. The Act, enacted

Continued on next page

“Memorial Day” continued from previous page

in 1971 under President Richard Milhous Nixon, moved several holidays from their traditional date to a certain Monday to set up three-day weekends because they were good for commerce. This included Memorial Day, which was officially moved from May 30th to the last Monday in May; this is the same day it has been celebrated ever since.⁷

Memorial Day has become the “unofficial start of summer” and, as a result, has strayed from its original meaning.⁸ I think that we all need to spend some time on Memorial Day (and the rest of the year, for that matter) to pause for a moment and focus on those who gave their lives for our freedom. In 2000, Congress also recognized the imperative of bringing meaning back into Memorial Day, and that is why they passed the National Moment of Remembrance Act. The Act established 3 p.m. (or 1500 for you military folks using the 24-hour clock) as a national moment of silence, and I encourage you all to pause then and think about what Memorial Day truly means. That does not mean you should refrain from all fun activities with your family or cancel the barbeque; it just means that the most important part of Memorial Day is that we come together as a nation to celebrate the lives and commemorate the sacrifice borne by our soldiers, sailors, and airmen because freedom does not come free.⁹

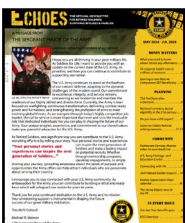
1. Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Edmund Burke Whitman, Society of the Army of the Cumberland, et al, The Army Reunion with Reports of the Meetings of the Societies of the Army of the Cumberland, the Army of the Tennessee, the Army of the Ohio, and the Army of Georgia (Chicago, Illinois, USA: S.C. Grigs and Company, 1869), “Remarks on National Cemeteries-Original Military Division of Tennessee: Army Reunion,” pg. 225-226.
2. “The Origins of Memorial Day,” U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. <https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/celebrate/memday.pdf>.
3. “Memorial Day,” National Cemetery Administration, June 29, 2023. <https://www.cem.va.gov/history/Memorial-Day-History.asp#:~:text=Originally%20>



(From left to right): President Joseph Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III, Joint Task Force - National Capital Region and U.S. Army Military District of Washington Commanding General Maj. Gen. Trevor J. Bredenkamp participate in a Presidential Armed Forces Full Honors Wreath-Laying Ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Va., May 27, 2024. (U.S. Army photo by Elizabeth Fraser)

- [called%20Decoration%20Day%2C%20it,faith%2C%20for%20permanent%20peace.%22.](https://www.military.com/holidays/memorial-day/how-decoration-day-became-memorial-day.html)
4. Blake Stilwell, “How ‘Decoration Day’ Became Memorial Day,” Military.com, May 12, 2020. <https://www.military.com/holidays/memorial-day/how-decoration-day-became-memorial-day.html>.
 5. Harry S Truman, “Proclamation 2889—Prayer for Peace, Memorial Day,” The American Presidency Project, May 22, 1950. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-2889-prayer-for-peace-memorial-day#:~:text=Now%2C%20Therefore%2C%20I%2C%20Harry,of%20prayer%20for%20permanent%20peace.>
 6. Lyndon Baines Johnson, “Proclamation 3727-Prayer for Peace, Memorial Day, 1966,” The American Presidency Project. May 26, 1966. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-3727-prayer-for-peace-memorial-day-1966#:~:text=Now%2C%20Therefore%2C%20I%2C%20Lyndon,to%20unite%20in%20such%20prayer.>
 7. Ashley Ross, “This Is Why Memorial Day Is a Three-Day Weekend,” Time, May 27, 2016. <https://time.com/4346170/memorial-day-three-day-weekend/>.
 8. History.com Editors, “Memorial Day,” History.com, May 24, 2023. <https://www.history.com/topics/holidays/memorial-day-history>.
 9. Ryan Scott, “Memorial Day, 3 p.m.: Don’t Forget,” Forbes, May 24, 2015. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/causeintegration/2015/05/24/memorial-day-3pm-dont-forget/?sh=1a1ed73a7f6f>.

Military Retiree Newsletters



[Army Echoes](#)



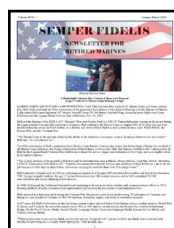
[Air Force Afterburner](#)



[Coast Guard The Long Blue Line](#)



[Navy Shift Colors](#)



[Marine Corps Semper Fidelis](#)



[DFAS newsletter](#)



Military initiatives at the USPTO

By Elizabeth Caraway, *UMA Secretary*

During our March 19 coffee break meeting, the USPTO Senior Military Advisor, Maj. Kayley Squire, gave a presentation on military initiatives within the agency. Agency military initiatives constitute three lines of effort: 1) Outreach and Engagement; 2) Innovation within the Defense Enterprise; and 3) Workforce Policies and Programs. Within these lines of effort are multiple strategies.

(1) Outreach and Engagement

- "Entrepreneurship Essentials" Road Shows to educate military spouses, veterans, and service members on how to start a business
- Conferences and other events
- Military child education

(2) Innovation within the Defense Enterprise

- Collaboration with the DOD on IP-related activities
- Labs, Research & Development Centers, and Innovation Units

(3) Workforce Policies and Programs

- Using employment policies and programs to recruit and retain veteran, National Guard and reservists, and military spouse employees
- Advancing initiatives to increase military spouse employment

How can you help?

Many UMA members want to get more involved but don't know how. Here are just a few of the ways you can help the agency's military initiatives:

- Attend events (special observances, happy hours, virtual coffee breaks, etc.)
- Volunteer to organize an event
- Invite a colleague to join the UMA
- Volunteer to speak at an upcoming coffee break

Our agency continues to be committed to our nation's service members and families and we're constantly looking for ways to advance our efforts.

Looking for physical locations of veteran resources or information about state-specific benefits for areas like taxes, education, health insurance, and more? Check the benefit library tab at either <https://www.myairforcebenefits.us.af.mil> or <https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil>.

Join our Facebook group: USPTO Military Association Mess

Now that more members of the UMA are teleworking, it can be more difficult to ask questions, share accomplishments, and get to know one another. Our new unofficial Facebook group, [USPTO Military Association Mess](#), seeks to provide a place to do that. The tongue-in-cheek name refers both to the "beautiful mess" that is everyday life, as well as a military mess, a designated area where military personnel socialize and eat.

Fun fact: the root of the word "mess" is the Old French word "mes," meaning a "portion of food."



UMA at the Women in IP event

The UMA participated in the Voluntary Employee Organization (VEO) showcase at the “Women in IP” symposium in March. Members talked to attendees about their groups. The UMA also hosted a snack break for the event.

We’re proud of our diverse, inclusive workforce and groups like the UMA that offer an opportunity for colleagues to connect, grow, and develop together.



(Special thanks to Charles Rones and Alford Kindred for the photos)

UMA Weekly Coffee Break recap

- MAR 5:** Col. Jennifer Lovett discussed the Space Force
- MAR 12:** Jamyra Alexander shared her journey
- MAR 19:** Kayley Squire presented on USPTO military initiatives
- MAR 26:** UMA activity updates and planning
- APR 2:** Arlene Jones discussed volunteer opportunity working as officials for a youth competition
- APR 9:** Latoya Harper-Williams discussed resumes
- APR 16:** Angela Jenkins discussed the UMA letter writing campaign
- APR 23:** UMA event recap and updates
- APR 30:** Jill Bakner of the USPTO Fitness Center presented
- MAY 7:** Alec Levy discussed his retirement from civil service
- MAY 14:** Timothy Goodwin shared his military career story

- MAY 21:** Members shared news and plans
- MAY 28:** UMA event recap and updates

The weekly UMA Coffee Break is a virtual gathering that offers UMA members the chance to tell their story, hear about veteran organizations, and ask questions. Coffee Breaks are every Tuesday morning at 9:30 a.m. and the Teams meeting link is distributed via UMA member email distribution list. Contact uma@uspto.gov if you are a member who is not receiving the invites.





A guide to American flag etiquette

By Ephraim Blair, *UMA Youth Communications Apprentice*

June 14 is Flag Day, the anniversary of the adoption of the first official American Flag in 1777 and a celebration of the American Flag and its illustrious history. During National Flag Week, which is the week of June 14, Americans are encouraged to fly the Stars and Stripes.¹ Yet, if you choose to fly the flag, you must know that you cannot casually display the flag because “the flag represents a living country and is itself considered a living thing.”² The American Flag is a unifying symbol that represents America’s founding ideals, which so many people have sacrificed for, especially in the military. That is why the U.S. Flag Code was first published in 1923 and codified into Title Four of the U.S. Code in 1942. Although the Flag Code is not enforced by law (you will not be prosecuted if you mishandle the flag), it is still essential to honor the traditions outlined within it to give the flag the respect it deserves.³

Basic Rules to Keep in Mind

First and foremost, the American Flag should never touch the ground or anything below it. Secondly, never fly the flag upside down, except as a sign of distress; always have the Union (the blue rectangle with all the stars) facing up. Thirdly, the flag should never be used as a receptacle to carry things. Fourthly, never use the flag as an article of clothing or use one as scraps to make them. Fifthly, keep the flag clean; take it inside during inclement weather and take good care of it. Sixthly, do not use the flag for advertising or embroider it on a disposable item. Seventhly, let the flag fly freely; do not fasten or tie it up in a way that hinders its free movement. Eighthly, do not mark up the flag in any way. Finally, do not use the flag as a casual decoration; use bunting instead. This gives a patriotic effect without violating the Flag Code.⁴

When Can You Display the Flag?

You can fly every day of the year, but it is especially encouraged upon Presidential Proclamation and Federal Holidays, State Holidays, and other special occasions. Customarily, the flag is only flown on a building or a flagpole between sunrise and sunset. Still, it is permissible to display the flag at night if it is properly lighted and if one has a desired patriotic effect.⁵ For example, the flag atop the White House has been flown 24/7 since the September 1970 Proclamation issued by President Nixon.⁶

Raising and Lowering the Flag

“When raising the flag, [one should] hoist [it] briskly to the top of the pole” to show an eagerness to raise the flag. However, one should lower it slowly for respect and dignity.



The Defense Health Agency’s 9/11 remembrance ceremony at Defense Health Headquarters in Falls Church, Virginia, featured a flag-folding ceremony and a reflection from retired U.S. Army Col. (Dr.) James Geiling, who served as director of the DiLorenzo Pentagon Health Clinic on the day of the attacks.. Preparing to fold the U.S. flag are U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Jillian Kozub with DHA Health Informatics and U.S. Army Sgt. First Class Akela Clark with DHA Health Care Operations, dental section.(Photo by Robbie Hammer)

Flying Flags on the Same Staff

Whenever all the flags are on the same staff, the American Flag should be on top and must be the same size or larger than all the flags below. (The one exception is that the flag of the United Nations can be flown higher only at the UN Headquarters.)

Flying Flags on Separate Flag Poles of the Same Height

The American Flag should be on the flag pole “furthest to the left as it is most commonly observed.” Other flags can be displayed at the same height, however, they may not be larger or higher than the American Flag. Also, the American Flag should always be the first flag raised and the last one lowered.

Flying Flags on Separate Poles of Different Sizes

Whenever this configuration is used, the American Flag should be flown on the tallest pole in the middle of all of the other ones.

Flying the American Flag Next to Foreign Flags

Each nation’s flag should be on a separate flag pole, and each flag should be the same size and at the same height because international etiquette and custom forbid “the display of the flag of one nation above another in time of peace.” Again, the American Flag should be the furthest left and followed by the other nation’s flag in alphabetical order, i.e. Canada, France, etc.

Continued on next page

“Flag etiquette” continued from previous page



The U.S. flag flies at half-staff in observance of Memorial Day at the Brookwood American Military Cemetery, England, May 26, 2024. Throughout the course of U.S. history, Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines have given their lives in defense of the Nation. On Memorial Day, we pay solemn tribute to their ultimate sacrifice. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Jessica Avallone)

When is the Flag Supposed to be at Half-Staff?

The flag is to be flown at half-staff upon the order of the President, a state governor, and the Mayor of D.C. These proclamations can commemorate a national tragedy, a national day of remembrance, or the death of government officials, military personnel, and first responders. On Memorial Day, flags are flown at half-staff but are raised at noon.⁷

Conclusion

The American Flag is an enduring global symbol of freedom and represents our nation’s highest ideals. That is why, during the Pledge of Allegiance, we “pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

*“You’re a grand old flag
You’re a high-flying flag
And forever in peace may you wave
You’re the emblem of
The land I love
The home of the free and the brave!”*

-George Cohan

1. The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, “Flag Day,” Encyclopedia Britannica, August 17, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Flag-Day>.
2. Title Four of U.S. Code §8. “Respect for the Flag”, Clause J, (2024). <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid:USC-prelim-title4-section8&num=0&edition=prelim#:~:text=The%20flag%20represents%20a%20living,left%20apel%20near%20the%20heart>.
3. “Flag Rules and Rituals,” National Museum of American History. <https://amhistory.si.edu/starspangledbanner/flag-rules-and-rituals.aspx#:~:text=The%20U.S.%20Flag%20Code%2C%20first,for%20advertising%20and%20to%20decorate>.
4. “Flag Etiquette,” Veterans of Foreign Wars. <https://www.vfw.org/community/flag-etiquette>.
5. “U.S. Flag Code,” Military.com, August 30, 2021. <https://www.military.com/flag-day/us-flag-code.html>.
6. “9.4.1970 - The Flag Flies High,” The Richard Nixon Foundation, September 12, 2012. <https://www.nixonfoundation.org/2012/09/9-4-1970-the-flag-flies-high/>.
7. “Flag Etiquette,” FlagsUSA. <https://flagsusa.com/flag-etiquette/>.

USPTO employees may qualify for Family and Medical Leave Act

USPTO colleagues transitioning directly from military to civilian federal employment will be granted qualifying service for certain leave benefits, thanks to a new law.

On December 22, 2023, President Biden signed into law HR 2670, the “National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2024.”

The act deems “honorable” active service in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, or Marine Corps of the United States as qualifying service towards the 12-month eligibility requirement for the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and Paid Parental Leave (PPL) when transitioning directly from military to civilian federal employment.



USPTO team members who become immediately eligible for FMLA leave may also become immediately eligible for paid parental leave if they otherwise qualify for such leave based on the birth or placement of a child since paid parental leave is used via substitution for FMLA leave.

For more information on eligibility, please contact the FMLAQuestions@uspto.gov or MatPat_PPL@uspto.gov.



USPTO Community Day: "Our Diversity Is Our Strength"



The USPTO hosted its 27th annual Community Day on May 7. The celebration of the agency's diversity has been held annually since 1996. The theme of the event this year was "Our Diversity Is Our Strength." Historically held in the spring or summer, Community Day has been a time for employees to learn about the various groups across the agency, for groups to answer questions and recruit new members, and for colleagues to enjoy time together.

(Photos, clockwise from below: The Color Guard presents during the National Anthem; Members of various voluntary employee organizations celebrated Community Day with a picnic in Texas, including UMA board member Keith Delahoussaye, who holds up the "O" balloon; UMA members prepare for the parade; UMA members stand at the UMA table; UMA vice president Michael Argüello presents the UMA challenge coin to USPTO Director Kathi Vidal. (Color Guard and challenge coin photos by Jay Premack/USPTO; parade photo by Charles Rones)



Headline highlights: A look at news affecting veterans

VA improves access to care, reduces wait times for new patient appointments in primary and mental health care:

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced improved wait times for new patient appointments in primary care and mental health care across the VA health care system.

VA announces grant program to help service members and milspouses transition from the military to civilian life:

Grants will be awarded to eligible organizations that provide employment-based resources and tools for transitioning service members and spouses — including resume assistance services, interview training, job recruitment training, employment placement services, and additional services that lead directly to a successful transition.

Age 45 or older? Screen for colorectal cancer with TRICARE: Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer among men and women in the United States—and it’s on the rise among people under age 50, according to the National Cancer Institute. In 2022, colorectal cancer screening guidelines changed. Now, anyone at average risk for colorectal cancer should start regular screenings at age 45.

National Guard and Reserve Members: Explore Plan Options with TRICARE Handbook

MyPay account for Gray Area Retirees: For Army National Guard, Air National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, and Air Force Reserve Gray Area Retirees (those who’ve retired but are not yet eligible to draw retired pay), there is a new “Future Retiree” myPay account to stay connected until they start receiving retired pay.

Retirees, Disabled Veterans, Military Can Access On-Installation Wellness Services through the Exchange: The Exchange offers vital wellness services such as dental, optometry and chiropractic care, as well as nutrition centers and durable medical equipment stores, right on military installations.

Veteran Resources and Contacts

USPTO Veteran Hiring Program Manager: Sharon Gibson, sharon.gibson@uspto.gov or HireVets@uspto.gov

USPTO OHR Military Service Time Buy Back Contact: Gladys English, gladys.english@uspto.gov

Benefits questions for current Reservists: BenefitsTeam@uspto.gov

Pay questions for current Reservists: OHR-CB@uspto.gov

Veterans Affairs (VA) Information

[GI Bill](#)

[Defense Finance and Accounting Service](#)

[TRICARE](#)

[Combat-Related Special Compensation](#)

[Veterans Service Records](#)

[Veterans Crisis Line](#): Dial 988 then Press 1, or Text 838255

CALL Dial 988 then Press 1

CHAT [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](https://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat)

TEXT 838255

Veterans Crisis Line
DIAL 988 then **PRESS 1**

