Military, Law, and more ...

Kentucky's first annual Freedom Festival at Camp Nelson opens with firing of 'Josephine'

By Charles Blatcher, III
Chairman,
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The Firing of "Josephine"the Civil War Cannon for the opening ceremony got the day off with a bang! ***(Photographer: Shane Grayson)***

Among the organizers and participants of the historic First Annual Freedom Festival at Camp Nelson were from left to right: Charles Blatcher, III, chairman of the National Coalition of Black Veteran Organizations; State Senator Gerald Neal; Ranger Tuan Phan,, director of Interpretation; and Representative George Brown, Jr. , chairman of Kentucky Legislative Black Caucus. ***(Photographer: Shane Grayson)***

Kentucky has had its share of severe weather for a season. If rain makes things grow, everyone in Kentucky should be seven feet tall this summer. In planning an outdoor event the one thing we could not predict a year out was the weather. The best we could do was hope the Weather GOD smiled on us that chosen day. The heavens smiled on the state on June 21st for the first annual Brigadier General Charles Young Memorial Historical Freedom Festival. The event held at Camp Nelson National Monument came about without a cloud in the sky.

Two years ago, the National Coalition of Black Veterans called for establishing a corridor through the states of Kentucky and Ohio named to honor the late Brigadier General Charles Young. The concept behind the corridor was to allow Black History entities located on the 170-mile route to share the positive benefit generated from the late Buffalo Soldier's name and fame. We contacted the Governor's Office for directions on how to make it happen. They informed us of the process with the assurance the Governor would support the legislation if it made it to his desk for a signature. Under the leadership of State Senator Gerald Neal and Representative George Brown, Jr joined by Senator Steve West the Kentucky Legislative Black Caucus introduced legislation calling for the name recognition. Under their leadership Senate Joint Resolution 253 was signed officially establishing the corridor in March 2023. With the passage, efforts began to establish what we hoped to be an annual event to promote tourism to the state and region.

Camp Nelson National Monument which is the most southern terminus of the corridor proposed hosting an event designated as the "Freedom Festival." The event's name was drawn from the Civil War History of the garrison. Drawing a quote from the 160th Anniversary publication of Camp Nelson: The camp was established as a US Army fortified base, supply depot, and hospital. It evolved to become a recruitment center and refugee camp for White civilians fleeing Confed-

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> *"...The camp was established as a US Army fortified base, supply depot, and hospital. It evolved to become a recruitment center and refugee camp for White civilians fleeing Confederate occupation in East Tennessee in 1863. The following year, the base evolved to become one of the country's largest recruitment and training centers for African American soldiers during the Civil War and served as a refugee camp for their wives and children"*

NSSF responds to AFT regulations in Pres. Trump's 'One Big Beautiful Bill'

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Amendment.

Reforms Over Change

That's all against the backdrop of the Trump administration's proposal to merge the ATF into the Drug Enforcement Administration, which requires Congressional approval. That's a move NSSF doesn't think is the best for gun owners or the industry. Course corrections are already taking place within the ATF and NSSF believes that's the best way forward.

President Trump named FBI Director Kash Patel, and later Army Secretary Daniel Driscoll as ATF's Acting Directors. That was followed shortly by the announcement that Robert Cekada was named as ATF Deputy Director. He brings over two decades of ATF experience and three decades of law enforcement understanding to the job.

But combining the two agencies, which is not a new idea, could invite future administrations to revive the Biden administration-era abuses yielding a significantly larger federal agency against the industry and gun owners. Further, the deep relationships between NSSF and ATF are at stake and ATF has long recognized that the firearm industry – and firearm retailers, specifically – are vital to preventing illegal firearm trafficking.

NSSF also has concerns with the Trump administration's plans to slash ATF's budget by about $480 million. Efficiencies can be found and DOGE's work inside ATF is welcome. The budget can be trimmed, but might be better done with a scalpel instead of a meat cleaver. Deep cuts could negatively impact both the firearm industry and customers who want to buy guns. Drastic budget cuts could come at the expense of National Firearms Act form approval times, import permits, license issuance and renewals and product classifications.

None of this is to say that the sky is falling, as some critics would have you believe. DOGE has proven that it can find better ways of doing business and identifying duplicitous, outdated, and unnecessary regulations.

Reforms Underway

Reforms at ATF are already happening. NSSF is working to bring about more changes. Reuters reported that ATF said it was "reviewing and modernizing its regulations consistent with" President Trump's executive order and U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi's establishment of a Second Amendment Task Force to advance, protect and promote

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FedEx St. Jude Championship invites grant applications for military and first responder support in the Mid-South

MEMPHIS, Tenn.— In celebration of the Fourth of July, the FedEx St. Jude Championship opened its latest grant cycle to support military members, veterans and first responders in the Mid-South.

The application period will remain open until September 30, 2025.

Through the Positively Memphis Community Fund, grants ranging from $1,000 to $25,000 will be awarded to nonprofit organizations, government entities and educational institutions dedicated to serving those who protect and serve the community.

Applicants must:

•Serve the Mid-South region

•Be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, government entity (including law enforcement or fire departments), or educational institution

•Provide services in a non-discriminatory manner

The application period will remain open until September 30, 2025.

"We're proud to support the organizations that stand behind the people who serve our communities every day," said Joe Tomek, Executive Director of the FedEx St. Jude Championship. "Through this grant program, we hope to amplify the important work being done to care for military families, veterans and first responders here in Memphis."

For more details and to apply, visit: https://fedexchampionship.com/memphis-community-fund

This initiative is part of the tournament's robust year-round support for the military community, which also includes special ticketing programs, on-site recognition and dedicated fan experiences.

Military offerings for the 2025 FedEx St. Jude Championship:

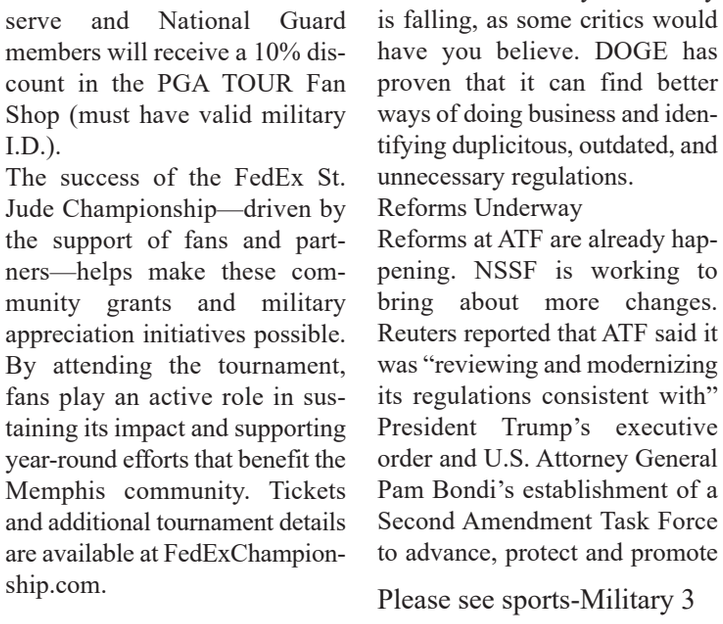
•Ticket program: Active-duty, retired, reserve, veterans, and National Guard members (plus one guest) are eligible to claim complimentary tickets for the **Pro-Am presented by First Horizon Bank** (Wednesday, August 6) and one competition day of their choice between August 7–10 (Thursday-Sunday), while supplies last. Each ticketed adult may also bring up to two kids ages 15 and under for free. Valid identification and credentials are required.

•**Patriots' Outpost presented by Big River Steel:** A reserved venue on the No. 8 green offering shaded seating and complimentary refreshments (must have valid military I.D. for entry).

•**PGA TOUR Fan Shop Discount:** Active-duty, retired, reserve and National Guard members will receive a 10% discount in the PGA TOUR Fan Shop (must have valid military I.D.).

The success of the FedEx St. Jude Championship—driven by the support of fans and partners—helps make these community grants and military appreciation initiatives possible. By attending the tournament, fans play an active role in sustaining its impact and supporting year-round efforts that benefit the Memphis community. Tickets and additional tournament details are available at FedExChampionship.com.

FedEx St. Jude Championship to give complimentary tickets to military personnel

All military personnel should visit FedExChampionship.com/tickets to claim their tickets, if assistance is needed, please contact: ticketsupport@pgatourhq.com.

Parking passes are not included in any ticket purchases. A separate parking pass is required each day of tournament week and must be purchased online in advance.