

The FOCUS



FEBRUARY 2026

NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS THEMES AND MESSAGES

February Observances

1 National Freedom Day (13th Amendment)

2 Army Nurse Corps Established (1901)
Groundhog Day

4 USO Birthday (1941)

8 Super Bowl LX

14 Valentine’s Day

16 Presidents Day

17 Mardi Gras

19 Coast Guard Reserve Birthday (1941)

23 Iwo Jima Flag Raising (1945)

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February - KLW Competition

Maj. Gen. Keith L. Ware Communication Awards Competition Timeline

KLW SOP

Jan. 8, 2026

IV. Competition Timeline

MONDAY, JULY 28, 2026
SOP Launch Q&A with Sgt. Maj. Ferguson, via MS Teams
Session 1: July 28, 2025 1000 to 1100 EST [MS Teams link](#)
Session 2: July 28, 2025 1900 to 2000 EST [MS Teams link](#)

JANUARY 1 – DECEMBER 31, 2025
Production dates for materials entered into the 2025-26 competition

NLT JANUARY 23 2026
ACOM, ASCC, DRU competitions complete

NLT JANUARY 30, 2026
All entries, including SGM Dawn Kilpatrick Memorial AUSA Scholarship nominations, due to HQDA

FEBRUARY 2-13, 2026
KLW judging by DA panelists

NLT FEBRUARY 17, 2026
KLW results and SGM Dawn Kilpatrick Memorial AUSA Scholarship recipient announced

OCTOBER 2026
SGM Dawn Kilpatrick Memorial AUSA Scholarship recipient recognized at a ceremony conducted during the AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition in Washington, D.C.

For full details on the new Keith L. Ware award categories see the Standard Operating Procedures in the link below (NIPR users copy and paste link into browser):

https://www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/klw/admin/2025-26_klw_sop.pdf

On the cover:

U.S. Army Capt. Erik Gorman, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 297th Regional Support Group, Alaska Army National Guard, embraces his son upon returning to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, after completing a deployment to Europe, Dec. 19. The deployment was in support of U.S Army Europe and Africa’s Operation European Assure, Deter and Reinforcement. (U.S. Army photo by Alejandro Peña)

Leadership News and Notes

Air National Guard Media Contest

Due to Defense Media Activity canceling the Department of War awards, the DVIDS portal will no longer be used for submitting or judging the competition.

For the MMA competition:

The deadline to submit your products to NGB will be Feb. 13, 2026 by 11:59 p.m. EST.

Key changes include:

Category Reduction: With the elimination of the DOW contest, the traditional PA categories were reduced from 34 to six.

Simplified Submission Process: The attached Unit & Major Command Submissions spreadsheet will be used for all submissions, replacing the DVIDS awards module. NGB will only accept one submission, per category, per state.

Each state will send one email with an MMA spreadsheet to Senior Master Sgt. Sarah Mattison, sarah.e.mattison4.mil@army.mil, who is the POC for the award program. NGB will only accept one submission, per category, per state. Please provide a MMA POC for your state in case we need to reach out with any questions regarding your submissions.

We look forward to seeing the great work that’s been done across the National Guard and recognizing those who have excelled!

Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions for submissions for either the KLW or the MMA competitions.

Community Engagement

The Army Guard flyover request instructions have been updated and are saved on Teams in the National Guard Bureau PAOs folder under Community Engagement files. Please reference the instructions to ensure request packets are accurate. Please route all Air National Guard and Army National Guard civic leader flight requests through the Joint Force Headquarters public affairs office for review. Air Guard requests must be routed to NGB-PA for approval, and Army Guard requests are approved at the state level using the same approval guidelines. The community engagement branch may be reached at for questions at ng.ncr.ngb-arng.mbx.ngb-community-engagement@army.mil



Aircrew members with the 28th Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade, Pennsylvania Army National Guard look out from the ramp of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter while taking part in a fly-over event during a Philadelphia Phillies baseball game at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, May 17. (U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Kate McNelis)

March Observances

National Nutrition Month

3 National Anthem Day
Navy Reserve Birthday (1915)

13 K-9 Veterans Day

17 St. Patrick’s Day

19 Operation Iraqi Freedom Began (2003)

25 National Medal of Honor Day

March - Space

Air Guard units in six states transition space mission to Space Force



California Air National Guard members with the 216th Electromagnetic Warfare Squadron pose for a photo with Space Force leadership prior to a transition of operational responsibility at Vandenberg Space Force Base, California, Sept. 5. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Kevin Hernandez)

Story by Ashley George, U. S. Space Force Combat Forces Command

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. – On Oct. 1 Space Operations Command took operational responsibility for nine designated space missions under the Air National Guard, a move designed to preserve mission effectiveness while streamlining the organization, training, and equipping of space professionals for long-term lethality.

This transition is part of the 2025 National Defense Authorization Act, section 514, which directed the Department of the Air Force to transfer covered space functions from the Air Guard to the U.S. Space Force. Once fully implemented, the Space Force will be able to manage their unique military force more effectively to meet current and evolving mission requirements, while simultaneously improving retention and quality of life.

“The Space Force’s operational responsibilities are critical to national security and this substantial, but necessary, transfer is another milestone to building a warfighting service and advancing the nation’s defense posture,” said U.S. Space Force Lt. Gen. David N. Miller, Jr., commander of Space Operations Command. “We will continue to build a unified team, capitalizing on the talent, experience and dedication that ANG personnel bring to the Space mission.”

A total of nine Air Guard missions, across six states, will transfer their space mission to Space Operations Command; those missions include electromagnetic warfare, intelligence, missile warning, and satellite communications. The new structure will capitalize on skillsets developed outside the military to continue delivering unmatched space capabilities.

April Observances

Military Saves Month
Month of the Military Child

5 Gold Star Spouses Day

6 Army Day/U.S. Entered WWI (1917)

9 National Former POW Recognition Day
(1942)

14 U.S. Air Force Reserve Birthday

19 Purple Up Day

23 U.S. Army Reserve Birthday

30 End of Vietnam War (1975)

30 National Military Brats Day

April - Family

Alaska Army Guard Family Readiness team ranked best in nation

Story by U.S. Air Force Maj. David Bedard, Alaska Air National Guard



JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — As the demands on military families grow amid deployments, separations and fiscal constraints, the National Guard Bureau recognized the Alaska Army National Guard’s Military and family readiness specialists as the top team in the nation for Fiscal Year 2025.

Despite a 50 percent reduction in staff due to budget cuts and attrition, the Alaska Army National Guard ranked first among all 54 states and territories for Family Readiness personnel following the bureau’s evaluation.

Performance evaluations conducted by the NGB assess staff training, deployment outreach, quality assurance reporting, personnel management, systems access and execution of spending plans.

The recognition highlights the team’s ability to sustain mission-critical support to service members and families under challenging conditions.

Military and family readiness specialists play a vital role in maintaining force readiness by ensuring troops can focus on their missions knowing their families are supported. They serve as the primary point of contact for service members and families seeking non-medical assistance and information on crisis intervention resources, general referrals, and deployment support tailored to the unique demands of military life.

Kera Spaulding, lead military and family readiness specialist, underscored the importance of the family’s well-being to the mission.

“Family readiness is a critical component of military effectiveness and mission success,” Spaulding said. “The core idea is that a service member’s ability to perform their duties is directly linked to the well-being of their family. When families are stable, resilient and well-supported, service members can focus on their military responsibilities with fewer distractions and less stress.”

For the full story follow the link below (NIPR users copy and paste link into browser):

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/556500/alaska-national-guard-family-readiness-team-ranked-best-nation>