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## Mayor Fischer celebrates decision to rename Louisville airport to honor Muhammad Ali

*'Wonderful next step' in further championing The Champ's legacy*

LOUISVILLE, KY (January 16, 2019) – Mayor Greg Fischer said he is pleased and proud of today's decision by the Louisville Regional Airport Authority Board to rename the city's airport for its native son Muhammad Ali.

The new name is Louisville Muhammad Ali International Airport. The airport's three-letter International Air Transport Association Location Identifier – SDF – will not change.

“Muhammad Ali belonged to the world, but he only had one hometown, and fortunately, that is our great city of Louisville. Muhammad became one of the most well-known people to ever walk the Earth and has left a legacy of humanitarianism and athleticism that has inspired billions of people,” the Mayor said. “It important that we, as a city, further champion The Champ's legacy, and the airport renaming is a wonderful next step.”

The vote came after a recommendation from a board working group that had studied renaming for more than a year.

“This is a historic day for the airport and our region,” said Jim Welch, chair of the Airport Authority Board. “By choosing to rename the airport for Muhammad Ali, a world-renowned humanitarian honored as a United Nations Messenger of Peace and an athlete honored as Sports Illustrated's Sportsman of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, we as a community are honoring his legacy and celebrating this global icon who is a fellow Louisvillian. This tells the world how proud we are to associate 'The Greatest' with not only our great city, but our great airport.”

Muhammad Ali's widow, Lonnie Ali said, “I am proud that the Louisville Regional Airport Authority and the City of Louisville are supportive of changing the name of the Louisville International Airport to reflect Muhammad's impact on the city and his love for his hometown. I am happy that visitors from far and wide who travel to Louisville will have another touch point to Muhammad and be reminded of his open and inclusive nature, which is reflective of our city. Muhammad was a global citizen, but he never forgot the city that gave him his start. It is a fitting testament to his legacy.”

The Airport Authority Board also authorized an agreement with Muhammad Ali Enterprises, LLC for use of Ali's name.

Citing research showing that Muhammad Ali has much greater name recognition than Louisville, Ky., Mayor Fischer said the airport renaming is just one piece of a much broader effort to share and celebrate Ali's Louisville ties, and he's organizing a community work group to develop plans to do that.

As the city of Ali's birth, and the place that throughout his life he proclaimed as "the greatest city in the world," the Mayor said, "It is our obligation and opportunity to showcase the many stories and complexities that made up the man known as 'The Greatest of All Time.'"

Elevating and further celebrating Ali as a hometown hero complements the city's Lean Into Louisville initiative. That effort, to be formally announced on Friday, is an unprecedented series of conversations, presentations, activities and art exhibits to confront the history and legacy of all forms of discrimination and inequality.

"Certainly, Muhammad faced discrimination and the impact of inequality, and he wasn't shy about sharing his views on those challenges," the Mayor said. "Lean Into Louisville embraces the Champ's values of Confidence, Conviction, Dedication, Giving, Respect and Spirituality and our city value of compassion. And if he were here, I feel certain that the 'Louisville Lip' would be a part of this conversation."

Championing The Champ also is consistent with the work that the Brookings Institution has identified as beneficial in growing Louisville's global identity.

Louisville Tourism confirms that the city stands to reap economic benefits by boosting Ali-related tourism, much as the city has done in establishing Bourbonism as a global tourist experience.

"Louisville Tourism applauds the proposal to reflect the legacy of the city's most famous son," said Karen Williams, its president and CEO. "Adding Muhammad Ali's name to the Louisville International Airport reminds travelers from around the world that our city is a place to have a touchpoint with one of the most recognized icons of all time. It supports current marketing efforts to engage in Ali's 'Footsteps of Greatness' as a reason to inspire visitation to Louisville."

Donald Lassere, president and CEO of the Muhammad Ali Center, said the center "is proud of the Louisville Regional Airport Authority for their forward-thinking decision regarding the airport's name change."

"During the week between Muhammad's passing and his memorial service in 2016, our city witnessed firsthand just how much Muhammad Ali meant to the world. Visitors flocked to Louisville from nearly every region of the globe to pay their respects to their champion," Lassere said. "At the Ali Center, we experienced a tremendous increase in visitors, and the city received continual global media coverage. We are confident that with this announcement, Louisville will continue to be seen around the world as a bold, compassionate city, and prompt an increase in visitors to all our great attractions."

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