



82^d AIRBORNE DIVISION WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM



82nd Museum Preservation Success Summary 2025-2026

In 2025-2026 the US Army Center for Military History attempted closure of the 82nd Airborne Division War Memorial Museum culminating with Congressional legislation in the 2026 NDAA stopping the closure.

Historical Background

- **1917: The 82nd Division was established.** The Division earned the nickname All-Americans because its soldiers came from all 48 states. The famous “AA” shoulder patch was created.
- **1944: The 82nd Airborne Division Association was officially formed** as a non-profit in England.
- **1945: The 82nd Airborne Division War Memorial Museum was established.** It is the second oldest Army Museum in the Nation. During occupation duty in Berlin the 82nd Honor Guard earned the nickname “America’s Guard of Honor”.
- **1956: The 82nd Historical Society was formed** as a non-profit to raise money to construct a permanent museum on Ardennes St, Fort Bragg, NC.
- **1956 – 1957: Funds were raised by the 82nd Historical Society in partnership with the 82nd Association, veterans, active-duty paratroopers, the city of Fayetteville and private donations.** A facility was built, and the museum was relocated from WWII barracks to its current location on Ardennes St, Fort Bragg, NC.
- **1957 – Present Day: The museum’s training mission:** educate visitors on the history, heritage, and culture of the All Americans from 1917 to Present Day. The museum conducts weekly Airborne Integration Course training for new Paratroopers. The museum grounds are the location of all Battalion changes of command ceremonies.
- **Present Day: The Museum receives 50,000 visitors annually** which includes twice a week, every day of the week, 12 months of the year, **mandatory new Paratrooper Orientation Training called: The Airborne Integration Course (AIC).** Where All-Americans learn the history, heritage, and culture of the 82nd Airborne Division.

The 2025–2026 Closure Attempt

- **4 June 2025: The U.S. Army Center of Military History formally announced a major restructuring of the Army Museum Enterprise.** The plan aimed to downsize the network from 41 to just 12 museums and four training



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support facilities by Fiscal Year 2029. The Rationales Cited: Severe maintenance backlog, insufficient staffing, and an effort to reallocate funding toward combat "readiness and lethality".

- **6 June 2025: Stars and Stripes** reported that the specific roster of 29 targeted facilities has **leaked online officially identifying the 82nd Airborne Division War Memorial Museum at Fort Bragg for closure**. The collection of over 5,000 original artifacts was slated to be packed up and absorbed by the U.S. Army Airborne and Special Operations Museum located roughly 11 miles away in downtown Fayetteville.
- **June – July 2025: Three Army Museum Foundations** contacted their U.S. Representatives: RIA History Foundation, Friends of Fort Sill Inc, and the Army Transportation Museum Foundation.
- **June – July 2025: U.S. Representatives from IL, OK, VA serving on the House Armed Services Committee** craft language in National Defense Authorization Act to protect their museums.
- **August 2025: Historical Society Board Member Michael C. Lopez initiates: KEEP IT OPEN CAMPAIGN in Fayetteville NC: contacting print media; 82nd Association (National HQ, Wound Warrior Fund, Gold Star Families, Regional Chapters), Veterans & Veteran Groups; politicians in Fayetteville, Cumberland County, the North Carolina General Assemble, U.S. Senators and U.S. Representatives; Greater Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce, & The Fayetteville Tourism Bureau.**
- **4 August 2025: Email from U.S. Representative Pat Harrigan's office (Member - House Armed Service Committee) to Board Member Lopez** states request for information sent to the Army Office of Legislative Affairs.
- **7 August 2025: Historical Society Board President Mark Acker** drafts a letter to All Americans to rally support.
- **11 August 2025: Text from U.S. Senator Thom Tillis office to Board Member Lopez** indicates Tillis / McConnell team-up to keep 82nd Airborne & Patton Museums open. Also, **Board President Mark Acker and Vice-President Roger Vickers** appeared on local radio "The Gilbert Baez" show regarding the museum's potential closure.



82^d AIRBORNE DIVISION

WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM



- **12 August 2025: Fayetteville Visitors Bureau creates a form letter to mail to political representatives in public office.** Board Member Lopez emails this letter to veterans and veterans' groups with the mailing addresses to US Senators and US Representatives in NC.
- **13 August 2025:** The Board of Commissioners for Cumberland County NC write four letters of advocacy to oppose closing the 82nd Airborne Museum to US NC Senators: Thom Tillis and Ted Budd and US NC Representatives: Richard Hudson and David Rouzer.
- **28 August 2025: Email from U.S. Representative Pat Harrigan's office to Board Member Lopez** states "(Committee) reviewing COAs before final decision."
- **August 2025: 82nd Airborne Association National and Regional Chapters and individual veterans** across the Nation contact their respective U.S. Senators and US Representatives.
- **August 2025: Roger Vickers the Historical Society Vice President and U.S. Liaison for the French-based non-profit organization WWII Veterans Back to Normandie** raises support to keep the 82nd Airborne Division Museum open in France.
- **August-December 2025: Board Member Lopez coordinates with the web manager Minuteman Graphics** to post letters of support from North Carolina politicians at the local, county, state & federal levels to the museum website. The website has global reach attracting 65K users annually.
- **September – November 2025: 82nd Historical Society with the Chamber of Commerce's assistance contracts Local Media Outdoor Advertising** to run digital billboards in several strategic locations leading in/out of Spring Lake, Fayetteville and Hope Mills NC.
- **9 September 2025: City View print media in Fayetteville NC runs front page article titled "Supporters Rally to Keep 82nd Airborne Museum Open".**
- **26 September 2025: Board Member Lopez drafted talking points for the Chair, Greater Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce, Government Relations Committee** to present to U.S. Senator Budd, member of the SASC:



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- **Amend H.R. 4016 DoD Appropriations Act, Section 8174 Spending Reduction Account;** restricts the Army from closing Rock Island Arsenal Museum (IL), Fort Sill National Historic Landmark & Museum (OK), and Army Transportation Museum (VA). **To include the 82nd Airborne Division War Memorial Museum (NC).**
- **Support H.R. 3838 National Defense Authorization Act, Section 351.** Establishment of the Army Museum System - that requires the Secretary of the Army to establish criteria for museum closures and to notify Congress.
- **H.R. 4016 and H.R. 3838 were the initial House vehicles whose core provisions were ultimately consolidated and signed into law under the Senate vehicle (S. 1071) as Public Law 119-60.**
- **December 2025: Congress passed targeted language in the National Defense Authorization Act and the Consolidated Appropriations Act that legally block unilateral closures through strict operational and transparency requirements contained in Public Law 119-60 Section 374.**
- **April 2026: The US Army Center of Military History officially halted and paused its planned closure of 29 Army museums.**

Conclusion and Expression of Gratitude

The successful defense of the second oldest Army Museum in the Nation is a testament to the enduring bond of the All-American family. By securing Public Law 119-60, our collective coalition ensured that future generations of paratroopers will continue to learn the sacred history, heritage, and culture of the 82nd Airborne Division exactly where that history is made. The 82nd Historical Society extends its profoundest thanks to our congressional champions, local business leaders, community partners, and the global network of 82nd veterans whose swift, unwavering advocacy kept our doors open. Mission complete.

Board Members

President: LTC (Ret) Mark Acker, **Vice President:** CSM (Ret) Roger Vickers, **Secretary:** Ms. Shantay McQueen, **Treasurer:** CSM (Ret) Chris Nunez, **Directors:** SFC (Ret) Jim O'Connor, SFC (Ret) Steve Wykel, CW4 (Ret) Jesse Taitague, COL (Ret) Michael C. Lopez, **Ex-Officio:** BG (Ret) John W. Aarsen



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