

WICHITA DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER NATIONAL AIRPORT

The Story Behind Naming Wichita Dwight D. Eisenhower National Airport

Wichita Dwight D. Eisenhower National Airport proudly bears the name of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, a native son of Kansas. Though born in Texas, Eisenhower considered Abilene, Kansas—home to his presidential library, museum, and boyhood residence—his true hometown. Today, Wichita is honored to host the first and only airport in the United States named after the 34th President.

Eisenhower's legacy is deeply connected to aviation, both military and civilian, making him a fitting namesake for the airport in the city known as the Air Capital of the World. As a five-star general and Supreme Allied Commander during World War II, he understood the strategic importance of air power. As President, he focused on strengthening the nation's military air superiority, a move that fueled decades of military aircraft production in Wichita and helped the city thrive. This boom in aviation led to the construction of the city's current airport on the west side of Wichita.

President Eisenhower played a key role in advancing aviation and transportation in the U.S. He championed the creation of the United States Air Force Academy, signing legislation for its construction on April 1, 1954. He also supported the development of the Interstate Highway System, which boosted Wichita's economy and improved infrastructure across the nation. In 1958, Eisenhower signed two landmark bills: one establishing NASA and another creating the Federal Aviation Agency (now the FAA), laying the groundwork for America's leadership in aerospace and aviation.

The connection between Eisenhower and Wichita's airport runs even deeper. In the early 1950s, the Air Force required Wichita to relocate its airport from the site that became McConnell Air Force Base. The city entered into a prolonged legal and political battle with the federal government over funding for the new airport. Enter Earl Schaefer—a Wichita aviation pioneer and West Point classmate of Eisenhower—who is said to have contacted the newly inaugurated President about the city's dilemma. Remarkably, just two days after Eisenhower took office on January 20, 1953, the U.S. Justice Department withdrew its objections, and the city received full

federal funding to build the new airport. This pivotal moment cemented a special bond between President Eisenhower, Wichita, and its airport.

In recognition of Eisenhower's lasting impact on the nation, Kansas, and the City of Wichita, the Wichita Airport Authority sought to honor him by renaming Wichita Mid-Continent Airport. On October 8, 2013, the group Citizens for Eisenhower Airport presented a petition with 1,573 signatures to the Wichita City Council in support of the name change.

The Path to Renaming

November 5, 2013: The Wichita City Council reviewed the proposal and appointed a naming committee.

March 4, 2014: The Council voted 5–2 in favor of renaming the airport to Wichita Dwight D. Eisenhower National Airport and directed staff to begin the process for federal recognition.

April 8, 2014: A resolution to officially change the airport's name was adopted.

November 13, 2014: The Federal Aviation Administration formally approved the new name.

January 26, 2015: The airport launched its new identity, complete with a new logo, proudly honoring President Eisenhower.

Today, the Wichita Dwight D. Eisenhower National Airport stands as a tribute to a leader whose vision and support for aviation helped shape the modern world—and whose legacy continues to soar in the heart of Kansas.

