



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **FAYETTE COUNTY RAISES FLAG OVER NEW JAIL**

**Uniontown, PA** – The stars and stripes are flying high above the new Fayette County Jail this week.

Fayette County commissioners Scott Dunn, chairman; Vince Vicites and Dave Lohr; Veteran Affairs Director Brian Bensen and Warden John Lenkey presided over a flag-raising ceremony Friday, using the same flagpole that stood on the site during its decades as the United States Army Reserve Center.

The flagpole was removed shortly after Fayette County broke ground on the new jail in March 2021; fully restored and reinstalled prior to the new facility's opening on February 21, 2024. The American and Pennsylvania flags raised are new, as the old ones were retired – along with the U.S. Army Reserve Center sign – during a ceremony conducted by the Hopwood Amvets Honor Guard in 2019.

Dunn said he's proud that many of those same local veterans returned with the Honor Guard Friday and helped county officials complete the flag's story.

"This is a full-circle moment for Fayette County. Our veterans helped us retire the old flags and usher in the new era today. By preserving the original flagpole, we're marking the transition between this site's storied history and bright future," Dunn said. "This is a great day for Fayette County, because it allows us to rededicate our new jail and celebrate the success achieved here in just our first six months of operations. The American flag has always been a symbol of hope, and that's what we want to instill in everyone who walks through these doors."

Vicites said the ceremony was important because the American flag is "our symbol of freedom."

"It's great to have the same flagpole that stood at the U.S. Army Reserve Center still in use at this facility, because it's a piece of local history," Vicites said. "By keeping this flagpole at the new prison, we are showing respect and honoring the veterans that served at the former Army Reserve Center and thanking all that served our country."

Lohr said generations of Americans have "fought for, and continue to fight for, the freedoms our flag represents."

"Raising a flag at government buildings is about more than just doing what the law requires. It's about acknowledging who we are and where we came from," Lohr said. "We are the first nation founded on an idea; the idea that we are all created equal and that we all have fundamental rights, including the right to due process. It's appropriate to fly 'Old Glory' at our jail – a visible reminder as we strive to honor and protect those rights."

Lohr said the American flag means more to him than “just a piece of fabric hanging on a pole.”

“Serving in the Navy, our flag flying on the fantail of the ship meant that ship was ‘home.’ I remember being in Romania, a communist country, walking down the street, seeing the flag on the fantail of the ship and knowing we were safe, because brothers and sisters in the military would have come to save us, if need be,” Lohr said. “The red on that flag means that soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines will lay down their lives to save mine – and yours – in times of trouble. That flag is near and dear to my heart, should never be defaced and should be respected at all costs.”

Friday’s ceremony also included the dedication of a plaque marking the Fayette County Jail time capsule, which includes items from the former jail’s history and the story of the new jail. The time capsule is set to be opened on February 21, 2074 – the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the jail’s opening day.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit [www.fayettecountypa.org](http://www.fayettecountypa.org).

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