

A Birthday Letter to America

From the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce

September 17, 2026

Dear America,

On your 250th birthday, Dayton, Ohio, has a story to tell you about reinvention.

We've had some practice.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Dayton was known as the Innovation Capital of the World. Our community had more patents per capita than any other city in America. The Wright brothers were figuring out how to fly. Charles Kettering was figuring out how to start an automobile without a hand crank. National Cash Register was transforming business. Inventors and entrepreneurs seemed to be everywhere. Dayton was building America's future. And then, over the decades, much of the turn of the century manufacturing economy evolved, changed and became more technologically advanced.

However, a city built on invention never stops being inventive.

In 2026, the Dayton region is writing a new chapter.

One of our greatest assets is something that has been part of our community for more than a century: Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

The base is now Ohio's largest single-site employer, with more than 38,000 employees and an estimated \$15 billion annual economic impact. An additional 70,000 people off base have their livelihoods connected to WPAFB. Additionally, WPAFB has become a remarkable engine of research, engineering, technology and national security innovation.

Additionally, industries like healthcare, advanced manufacturing, logistics and distribution and technology are driving our local economy.

All of this give us something important to celebrate on America's 250th birthday.

The Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce is bringing businesses and government together. Connecting employers with talent. Supporting entrepreneurs. Investing in infrastructure. And remaining steadfast that free enterprise, private sector investment and business sweat grew this community and this how we will grow in the future.

In 2025, the Chamber hosted the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Dayton, Ohio to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accords, in 2026 the State of Ohio was named the #1 state to do business by CNBC and the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce was named in top 3% of chambers of commerce nationally.

Looking forward, what we hope for America over the next 250 years is that this great country continues supporting businesses taking risk, creating free enterprise and investing private capital. It is the businesses that risk it all and we need our public partners to walk shoulder to shoulder with us.

So, America, on your 250th birthday, the Dayton region sends you a birthday wish:

Keep inventing.

Keep bringing private – public partners together.

Keep giving entrepreneurs room to try.

Keep investing in the people and places that will build what's next.

Keep supporting a free enterprise economy.

And when the future doesn't look quite like the past, don't be afraid.

Build the future anyway.

From the birthplace of American invention in Dayton, Ohio, we're proud to be part of the next era of invention.

Happy 250th birthday, America.

Dayton is always thinking about tomorrow.

With pride,



Chris Kershner
President & CEO
Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce