



SOUTH

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QofM

Question of the Month



## ***Calling All (Honorary) Colonels! Which states give honorary titles and why?***

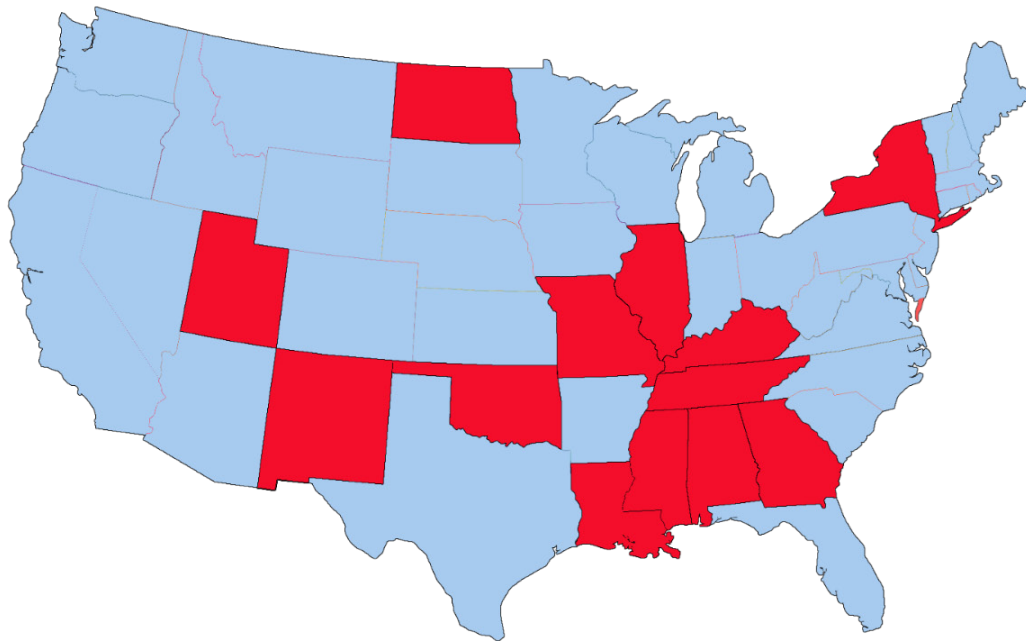
You might know that, while he did serve in the army, KFC Founder Harland Sanders never actually made it up through the ranks to Colonel. Instead, the “colonel” in Colonel Sanders comes from the Commonwealth of Kentucky’s [longstanding practice](#) of bestowing the honorary title on individuals for “contributions to the community, state or nation, and for special achievements of all kinds.”



Beyond Colonel Sanders, [other famous Kentucky colonels](#) include Muhammed Ali, Dolly Parton, John Glenn, Jennifer Garner, Bob Barker, Bob Dylan, and Whoopi Goldberg, along with at least seven U.S. presidents, Queen Elizabeth II, and two popes.



But Kentucky isn’t alone in naming colonels; 12 other states also have honorary colonels. For example, [Elvis](#) was an honorary colonel of Tennessee, and his manager, [Tom Parker](#), was given the honor by Louisiana.



### States with Honorary Colonels:

**Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Utah**

Unlike the title, the practice of naming colonels is hardly uniform. In most states, the governor awards the title to residents for acts of service to the community (much like Colonel Sanders), however, there are exceptions.

In [Alabama](#), for example, honorary colonels are awarded by the Adjutant General of the Alabama National Guard. In [Georgia](#), the full title of colonel is reserved for up to two members of Governor's staff, but an unlimited number of residents can be named "honorary lieutenant colonel."

Further complicating things is how long the title lasts. Kentucky colonels retain their honorific for life, whereas honorary colonels and lieutenant colonels in some states like Georgia only maintain their standing for the length of a governor's time in office. In addition, some states bestow certain privileges with the honor. For example, [Oklahoma](#) honorary colonels are exempt from jury duty.

If "colonel" isn't to your liking, some states like

[Missouri](#) also bestow the title "honorary captain" to residents who might prefer a seafaring rank. Other states forgo "colonel" entirely and bestow only naval titles (interestingly, these tend to outrank colonels). In [Texas](#), colonel is no longer used, but you can now become an honorary admiral. In [Rhode Island](#), you can be an honorary commodore. Ironically, in triple-landlocked [Nebraska](#), the governor can make you an honorary admiral of the state's "great navy." The award includes the tongue-in-cheek phrasing, "I do strictly charge and require all officers, seamen, tadpoles, and goldfish under your command to be obedient to your orders as Admiral."

Other states have taken a different approach to the highest honor a resident can receive. Notably, Indiana has the [Sagamore of the Wabash Award](#), which was created in the 1940s when the then-governor wanted an award equal to the Kentucky Colonel. Across the South, several states have different high honors, including North Carolina's [Order of the Long Leaf Pine](#) and South Carolina's [Order of the](#)

Palmetto. Virginia has the [Outstanding Virginian Award](#) and West Virginia has the [Distinguished West Virginian](#). Florida bestows the [Great Floridian Award](#).



Lastly, [Arkansas](#) is famous for an award given to *nonresidents*: the Arkansas Traveler Certificate. "Travelers," as they're known, are "out-of-state visitors who have contributed to the progress, enjoyment or well-being of the State of Arkansas." Residents of the Natural State are eligible for the Capitol Citation Award.

<b>HONORIFICS &amp; AWARDS AMONG SOUTHERN STATES</b>	
<b>State</b>	<b>Honorific/Award</b>
Alabama	Colonel
Arkansas	Capitol Citation & Arkansas Traveler Certificate
Florida	Great Floridian
Georgia	Lieutenant Colonel
Kentucky	Colonel
Louisiana	Colonel
Mississippi	Colonel
Missouri	Colonel or Naval Captain
North Carolina	Order of the Long Leaf Pine
Oklahoma	Colonel
South Carolina	Order of the Palmetto
Tennessee	Colonel
Texas	Admiral
Virginia	Outstanding Virginian Award
West Virginia	Distinguished West Virginian