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LOCAL BUSINESS OWNER EARNS NATIONAL AWARD FROM U.S SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR SUPPORTING NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE EMPLOYEES

Springfield HVAC and plumbing company owner is just back from the Pentagon where he was presented the Freedom Award. The award is the highest recognition by the U.S. government to civilian employers.

Springfield, MO (August 29, 2016) - Frank Elston can name drop, especially after last week. Elston who owns Benjamin Franklin Plumbing® and One Hour Heating & Air Conditioning®, based in Springfield, jetted off to Washington, D.C., spent time at the Pentagon and met with the U.S. Secretary of Defense and CEOs of major corporations. Elston, along with representatives of 14 other companies were honored with the 2016 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. The award recognizes companies for their support of guard and reserve members and their families.

Elston was nominated by Carl Phillips, his former manager of Benjamin Franklin Plumbing. Phillips serves in the Navy Reserve. When Phillips was deployed to Afghanistan, Elston helped his family back at home and made sure Phillips didn't have to worry about having a job to come home to. Elston employs other members of the National Guard and Reserve as well. "I hear horror stories from people who lose their jobs while they are deployed or their employers make it tough on them. I adjust their work schedules while they are away and do whatever I can to support them and their families. It's the least I can do while they are away defending our freedom," said Elston.

According to the Department of Defense, since September 11, 2001 more than 777,000 guard and reserve personnel deployed to wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. "We need to keep building bridges to our fellow citizens and communities that aren't as connected to those who serve and sacrifice on their behalf," said Defense Secretary Ash Carter. "Our guard and reserve and their employers, especially our awardees, build those bridges every day."

**photos of Frank Elston receiving the Freedom Award are attached.

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