



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aug. 22, 2022

22-32

CONTACT: Lt. Col. Marty Malone

OFFICE: 615.313.0662

marlin.e.malone.mil@army.mil

Knoxville Company Receives Prestigious Freedom Award

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Knoxville based UT-Battelle, which manages the Oak Ridge National Laboratory for the U.S. Department of Energy, is being recognized as one of the nation’s 15 recipients of the 2022 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. It is the highest recognition awarded by the U.S. government, under the auspices of the Department of Defense Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, to employers for their support of employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserves.

“This year, the ESGR received more than 2,700 nominations for companies to be considered,” said retired Brig. Gen. Jim Mungenast, the chair for Tennessee’s ESGR Committee. “These nominations are made by the employees themselves and come from all 54 states and territories. Just being considered is an honor, but Oak Ridge National Laboratory’s unparalleled support for its employees who serve in the Reserve Component goes well beyond what the law requires.”

This is the second time that UT-Battelle has been nominated for the Freedom Award. They were nominated in 2019 and again in 2022 by Maj. Maria McClelland, who currently serves with the 119th Cyber Operations Squadron based in Knoxville and works for Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

“I nominated UT-Battelle because they not only actively recruit veterans and current Guard and Reserve members, but they also go above and beyond to support those employees who are mobilized or deployed,” said McClelland. “This includes benefits and recognition before, during, and after deployment as well as offering liberal military leave for drill weekends and annual training. They show that they truly care, and it allows the reservist to focus on their military mission when deployed.”

The Freedom Award was first awarded in 1996. It is the highest in a series of employer recognition awards given by the ESGR and the Department of Defense.

In 2019, UT-Battelle was also selected for the ESGR’s Pro Patria award, as the top large employer in the Tennessee. The Pro Patria award given annually by each ESGR State Committee to one small, one large, and one public sector employer. The awardee demonstrates the greatest support to Guard and Reserve employees through their leadership and practices. It is also the highest award the Tennessee ESGR State Committee may bestow annually.

The official presentation of the Freedom Award is planned for Sept. 19, at McGhee Tyson Air Base in Knoxville.

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