



ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

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NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs and the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Women's Health Department Honor 25 Illinois Women Veteran Leaders in 2026

Chicago, IL – The Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) and the USDVA Women's Health Department at Jesse Brown VA Medical Center today announced the 25 Illinois Women Veteran Leaders in 2026 at Malcolm X College. Women veterans were nominated for their extraordinary leadership, contributions, and commitment to the women veteran community.

"It is my honor to congratulate these 25 exceptional veterans — Illinois women whose inspiring dedication and community leadership represent the very best of our state," said **Governor JB Pritzker**. "This incredible group continues to make a lasting impact and shape a brighter future for all women veterans."

"The women selected were among an impressive collection of nominees," said **IDVA Director Terry Prince**. "Each woman veteran has identified unmet needs and challenges and bravely approached them with innovation and determination, resulting in a profound impact on the community."

"To become a leader you need, driving innovation and positive change through expertise, dedication, and commitment to excellence. While also empowering, mentoring, and inspiring others to achieve their full potential! These Veterans have shown that strength and compassion can walk side by side, that leadership is rooted in service and that the impact of a Veteran extends far beyond the battlefield." said **USDVA Program Director Angela St. Paul**.

The program included remarks by IDVA Director Terry Prince and a keynote address from Ashley Tuburan, U.S. Navy veteran, attorney, and founder of DONUT MESS WITH HER, LLC. Ashley was in the first class of honorees in 2025. The honorees were presented with personalized awards and enjoyed networking and refreshments.



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The program was coordinated by IDVA Women Veterans Program Coordinator Margo Watson and USDVA Program Specialist Angela St. Paul.

The IDVA Women Veterans Program is committed to supporting the unique challenges and opportunities of women veterans. It is designed to provide women veterans access to services and resources and to build a community of strong women with shared experience. To learn more, visit: <https://veterans.illinois.gov/programs/women.html>

The USDVA Women's Health Services program provides a full spectrum of comprehensive medical care tailored to the unique needs of women Veterans. This includes primary care, reproductive health, mental health, and specialty services delivered by designated women's health providers. For more information, visit: <https://www.va.gov/chicago-health-care/health-services/women-veteran-care/>

Here are the honorees for the 25 Women Veterans Leaders of 2026

Melissa Beckford (Army)
Justyna Berry (Army)
Staci Boyer (Navy)
Rochelle Crump (Army)
Lourdes Hurtado Fernando (Army)
Dr. Glenisha Foreman (Marine Corps)
Tawanda Hanible (Marine Corps)
Melissa Farmer-Hill (Army)
Dr. Sonia Kennedy (Army)
Celeste Latham (Air Force)
Nicole Mandeville (Army)
Dr. Nikelcia Marcelin (Army)
Dr. Karen Stendson-McMillan (Army)
Nancy O'Connell (Air Force)
Ashley Owings (Army, Navy)
Ramona Pozek (Army)
Telisha Reinhardt (Navy)
Jen Solum (Air Force)
Shirley Spruiel (Army)
Aretha Spurlock (Army)
Amiee Wagoner (Army)
Kimyada Wellington (Army)
Shamika White (Navy)
Katia Woods (Army)
Shannon Yount (Marine Corps)