

Gov.-elect Evers and Lt. Gov.-elect Barnes: Announce additions to administration team

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MADISON – Today, Governor-elect Tony Evers and Lt. Governor-elect Mandela Barnes announced three new members of the administration.

Mary Kolar will serve as Department of Veterans Affairs secretary; Kathy Koltin Blumenfeld will serve as Department of Financial Institutions secretary; and Brian Pahnke will serve as the state budget director.

“The team members we are announcing today will help our administration connect the dots on important issues facing our state,” Tony Evers said. “I am confident they will make sure veterans and their families receive the benefits they have earned, work with the Wisconsin business and financial communities to encourage economic growth in all 72 counties, and help us build a state budget that reflects the priorities we heard at our budget listening sessions.”

“We must move past the us-versus-them mentality and work together on the issues facing the state,” said Mandela Barnes. “Adding these talented individuals to our team, who are committed to working together to solve problems, will help us move our state forward.”

“I look forward to being part of a team that will increase our reach to and communications with all Wisconsin veterans to ensure they and their families receive the benefits they have earned,” said Mary Kolar. “We will work to ensure veterans achieve their employment, education, and quality of life goals.”

“I am grateful for the opportunity to serve alongside this talented leadership team,” said Kathy Koltin Blumenfeld. “I am very optimistic about the future of our state and look forward to collaborating with our team, stakeholders, and leaders around the state to foster an environment of innovation and economic growth.”

“The state budget has many challenges, but it is also a great opportunity to work in a collaborative manner to advance a budget that reflects the values Wisconsin citizens shared with us during the budget listening sessions around the state,” said Brian Pahnke.

Mary Kolar, Department of Veteran Affairs

Mary Kolar is currently a Dane County Supervisor for the first district. She was elected in 2013 and is serving her third term as a director on the Wisconsin Counties Association Board of Directors. She is a retired U.S. Navy Captain who served twenty-eight years on active duty and chaired the Dane County Veterans Service Commission. Kolar has also served as the vice president of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Foundation Board of Directors.

She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and graduate degrees from the U.S. Naval War College and the University of Rhode Island.

Kathy Koltin Blumenfeld, Department of Financial Institutions

Kathy Koltin Blumenfeld is currently the executive vice president of special operations at TASC. Before joining TASC, she worked for CUNA Mutual Group for twenty-five years, most recently as vice president of lending and payment security. Blumenfeld served as a certified public accountant at two large firms and worked for State Senator Joe Strohl.

She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Brian Pahnke, Department of Administration, State Budget Office

Brian Pahnke currently serves as the assistant state superintendent for finance and management at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). He has held numerous budget and finance positions at several state agencies during his twenty-eight years of state service, including nearly five years in the state budget office during the Thompson administration.

He received his undergraduate degree from Miami University in Oxford, OH and his master's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.