

# Gov. Evers: Announces appointments to Blue Ribbon Commission on Veteran Opportunity

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today announced he has appointed leaders and members of the military and veteran community from around the state to serve on the Blue Ribbon Commission on Veteran Opportunity. The commission was [announced](#) during the governor's 2022 [State of the State address](#) earlier this year and [created](#) in the days following by [Executive Order #157](#). The commission is charged with developing comprehensive, long-term efforts to support Wisconsin's more than 300,000 veterans and address challenges they may face, including increased risk for economic and housing insecurity, mental and behavioral health needs, and substance use disorders, among other challenges, which is essential for ensuring the well-being of the state's veterans and supporting their success and opportunity.

"When I created this commission, I said it would have the very intentional involvement of veterans and their families and I am glad to make these appointments today to ensure that is the case," said Gov. Evers. "I have no doubt the folks on this commission will serve the veterans of Wisconsin well, using their own lived experiences and insights to inform and guide this important work. From ensuring every veteran has a roof over their head to addressing mental health challenges to expanding access to benefits our nation's heroes have so rightfully earned, we must work to find urgent solutions to the shortcomings in our society and in our state, and I look forward to seeing the commission's report in the coming months."

"I'm grateful to the governor for making Wisconsin veterans and their families a priority, and I'm especially grateful to the men and women who are giving their time and expertise to this commission," said Wisconsin Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) Secretary Mary Kolar, co-chair of the commission. "Right now, there are those who have served who don't have a place to call home, who are struggling with mental health, and many who are still navigating the transition to civilian life. I'm proud of the programs we run here in the state, but we must garner ideas to reach more veterans who need help and plan for the next generation. With the breadth of experience on this commission, this will be a fantastic opportunity to propose ideas and solutions that put the well-being of our veterans first."

"Our Wisconsin veterans have done their part to protect our freedom at home and overseas," said Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) Secretary-designee and commission co-chair Kathy Blumenfeld. "It is now incumbent upon us to honor their service by ensuring they have pathways to employment, housing, health care and other vital services in the Badger State. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve on this commission and engage in such important work."

Members of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Veteran Opportunity include:

- Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) Secretary Mary Kolar, U.S. Navy, retired, Co-Chair
- Department of Administration (DOA) Secretary-designee Kathy Blumenfeld, Co-Chair
- State Sen. Jeff Smith (D-Brunswick)
- State Rep. Deb Andraca (D-Whitefish Bay)
- Bridget Esser, Legislative Liaison, Department of Military Affairs (DMA)
- Al Labelle, U.S. Navy, retired, Wisconsin Legislative Director, Disabled American Veterans
- Nathan Gear, Wisconsin Army National Guard, retired, Executive Director & Department Adjutant, American Legion Department of Wisconsin
- Cory Geisler, U.S. Army, retired, Commander, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Department of Wisconsin
- Jim Strong, U.S. Army, retired, Co-Founder, Wisconsin Veterans Village
- Gregg Duffek, U.S. Marine Corps, retired, Tribal Veterans Service Officer, Stockbridge-Munsee Community
- Rock Larson, U.S. Air Force and Wisconsin Army National Guard, retired, President, County Veterans Service Officers Association of Wisconsin
- Yolanda Medina, U.S. Marine Corps, retired, Director of Military & Veterans Resource Center, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
- Matthew Schroeder, Director of Military & Veteran Services, Edgewood College
- Carolyn Morgan, Wisconsin Air National Guard, retired, Board Member of Operation Ruck 22
- Ronald Adams, Wisconsin Army National Guard, retired, Vice President of Field Diversity & Inclusion, Northwestern Mutual
- Nathaniel Millsap, U.S. Navy, retired, Director of Security & Cyber, Fincantieri Marinette Marine
- Scott Schultz, U.S. Marine Corps, retired, Assistant Farm Director, WAXX 104.5 FM
- Jesse Ehrenfeld M.D., U.S. Navy, retired, Physician Anesthesiologist and Senior Associate Dean, Medical College of Wisconsin
- Ying Vang, U.S. Army, Corporate Human Resources Manager, ORC Industries Inc.
- Natalie Isensee, U.S. Marine Corps, retired, Manager of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, WPS Health Solutions
- Jason Maloney, Wisconsin Army National Guard, retired, Congressional District 7 Representative, Wisconsin Board of Veterans Affairs
- Sheri Swokowski, U.S. Army, retired, Advisory, Modern Military Association of America

This commission will use a multidisciplinary and collaborative approach to identify gaps in existing services, opportunities for robust investment, areas for additional collaboration with federal and private partners, and obstacles to receiving services and program benefits designed for veterans, while reducing barriers to higher education, job training, employment, healthcare, and affordable housing, among other key areas. Under Executive Order #157, the commission will make recommendations to Gov. Evers later this year to potentially be included in the governor's forthcoming 2023-25 biennial budget proposal. The first meeting of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Veteran Opportunity will be held virtually on May 4, 2022.



An online version of this release is available [here](#).