

Gov. Evers: Announces DVA secretary Mary Kolar to retire

Posted on Thursday, Dec 29, 2022

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Contact: GovPress@wisconsin.gov

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today announced Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) Secretary Mary Kolar will retire from state service on Jan. 2, 2023. Secretary Kolar was appointed by Gov. Evers in 2019 and was among the first cabinet appointments made by the governor.

“Mary has been with us since Day One and has always been a fierce advocate for Wisconsin’s more than 300,000 veterans,” said Gov. Evers. “As a veteran herself, we have valued Mary’s insights and expertise to bolster supports and services to our nation’s heroes and their families, especially in her work as co-chair of our Blue Ribbon Commission on Veteran Opportunity. I wish Mary and her family well and want to share my sincere thanks for her decades of service to our state and country.”

From hosting roundtable discussions regarding the mental and behavioral challenges veterans face and suicide prevention forums to awarding grant funds to support veteran owned and veteran friendly businesses to raising awareness for homelessness and housing insecurity issues, during her time as secretary, Secretary Kolar has been a dedicated, staunch advocate for Wisconsin’s more than 300,000 veterans and their families.

Secretary Kolar also co-chaired the [Governor’s Blue Ribbon Commission on Veteran Opportunity](#) that was charged with developing comprehensive, long-term solutions to support 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, to help ensure the well-being of

the state's veterans and support their success and opportunity. As a result of the Commission's work and based on their recommendations, the governor invested [\\$10 million](#) in programs to support veteran employment, housing assistance, and mental health services earlier this year.

"I thank Gov. Evers and the phenomenal team he assembled to work on behalf of the people of Wisconsin during extraordinary times," said Secretary Kolar. "Since 2019, the Department of Veterans Affairs has strengthened partnerships, grown outreach, improved benefits and services, and laid a better foundation for the future of Wisconsin veterans and their families. It has been the honor of a lifetime to lead this department, staffed entirely by people dedicated to making life better for those who have served. My appreciation goes to them and to Gov. Evers for his ongoing support and leadership."

Prior to serving as secretary, Secretary Kolar represented downtown Madison on the Dane County Board of Supervisors from 2013 to 2019, working with the Dane County Veterans Service Office, and served on many community-based organizations, including as vice president of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Foundation's Board of Directors.

Originally from Wilton, Secretary Kolar joined the United States Navy in 1980, serving on active duty for 28 years and retiring as a captain (O-6). She earned master's degrees in National Security and Strategic Studies from the Naval War College and Adult Education from the University of Rhode Island, in addition to a bachelor's degree in marketing from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

Secretary Kolar's replacement will be announced in the coming weeks.