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/ Governor-elect Sherrill Announces Cabinet Picks to Lead Departments of Veterans Affairs and Military Affairs Following Department Split in January

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Brig. Gen. Yvonne L. Mays will be nominated to lead the Department of Military Affairs

Vincent Solomeno will be nominated to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs



TRENTON – Today, Governor-elect Mikie Sherrill named two public servants to lead the soon to be established Department of Military Affairs and the Department of Veterans Affairs. Legislation reorganizing the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMAVA) was signed into law in September and takes effect January 9, 2026.

Governor-elect Sherrill confirmed that U.S. Air Force Brigadier General Yvonne L. Mays will continue to serve as The Adjutant General of New Jersey and will be nominated to lead the Department of Military Affairs. U.S. Army Veteran Vincent Solomeno III, who currently serves as a deputy commissioner and the state's administrator of veterans affairs, will be nominated by Governor-elect Sherrill to serve as Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Governor-elect looks forward to working alongside Mays and Solomeno to ensure a trained, capable, and ready New Jersey National Guard and the transformation of state-delivered veterans, benefits, programs, and services. As Adjutant General, Mays will continue to lead more than 8,400 Citizen Soldiers and Airmen and manage the day-to-day Army and Air National Guard operations. In his new role, Solomeno will lead a new organization that includes three veterans homes, or long-term care facilities, two transitional housing facilities, twenty-one veterans service offices, and the busiest state-run veterans cemetery in the United States.

"I'm honored to nominate two leaders who have served our country and our state throughout their lives. Both Brig. Gen. Yvonne Mays and Vincent Solomeno have proven track records of delivering for service members and veterans, and have the experience needed to ensure a smooth transition as the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs transforms to better serve our state, those who are currently serving, and our veterans. Together, we will invest in New Jersey's defense and technology economy, support National Guard members and their families, and expand access to resources for veterans who have put their lives on the line for our country," **said Governor-elect Mikie Sherrill.**

"New Jersey is home to over 300,000 veterans. It's the honor of my professional life to be nominated to continue to serve them. I thank the Governor-elect for the opportunity to complete this once in a generation transformation of veterans services. The New Jersey Department of Veterans Affairs will not only meet standards. We will exceed them. As the first woman veteran elected governor in the history of the United States, I know that Governor-elect Sherrill will always prioritize Garden State heroes and the people who love them," **said Nominee for Commissioner Solomeno.**

"I am deeply honored and grateful to the Governor-elect for the confidence placed in me to continue serving as The Adjutant General of New Jersey. It remains the privilege of my career to serve our state and lead the Soldiers, Airmen, and civilian professionals of the New Jersey National Guard. I am thankful for the opportunity to continue this work, to advance readiness, and to serve New Jersey with excellence," **said Brig. Gen. Mays.**

"Mikie and I both served in the Navy and believe deeply that here in New Jersey, our service members, veterans, and their families should have all the support they need. I look forward to working with these two outstanding leaders to support New Jersey's veterans and our National Guard," **said incoming First Gentleman Jason Hedberg.**

Brig. Gen. Mays assumed her responsibilities in July 2024 and commands the more than 8,400 Soldiers and Airmen of the New Jersey National Guard. She leads, directs, and manages the execution of federal and state missions. With more than four decades of military service, Brig. Gen. Mays enlisted in the Air Force in 1983, beginning a long, decorated career in the U.S. Armed Forces. Prior to commissioning, while on active duty, she participated in numerous operations, including Operation Just Cause, and deployed in support of Operation Desert Shield/Storm. Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, she provided active duty support to Operations Noble Eagle and Enduring Freedom.

A U.S. Army Veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom, Solomeno has overseen the expansion of the state's corps of trained and accredited veterans service officers and increased the number of dedicated State of New Jersey Veterans Service Offices from 14 to 21 – one in each of the state's twenty-one counties. He also led efforts to increase wages for frontline healthcare workers, upgrade medical equipment, and implement new technology and evidence-based best practices at the New Jersey Veterans Memorial Homes at Menlo Park, Paramus, and Vineland. He earned his Bachelor of Science from the University of Scranton and a Master of Arts from the University of Amsterdam.

The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs currently manages both military operations and veterans' services. Beginning in January, the newly established Department of Veterans Affairs will exclusively focus on veteran-related matters, such as housing, health care, mental health services, and benefits for veterans and their families. Military functions will continue at the current department, which will be renamed the Department of Military Affairs.

Governor-elect Sherrill was a leading advocate for service members and veterans throughout her time representing New Jersey's 11th District in the House of Representatives. She helped pass the Blue Water Navy Act to grant Vietnam Veterans access to long-overdue health care, and led the fight to pass the PACT Act, legislation to grant care to veterans exposed to toxic burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan. She also authored and passed legislation to let veterans train service dogs to help manage the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Additionally, she successfully brought a Vet Center Outpost to Morris County after veterans shared with her that they were struggling to access care during a mental health crisis because of the distance to the nearest Vet Center.

As a former member of the House Armed Services Committee, Governor-elect Sherrill bolstered New Jersey's economy by supporting innovative programs at Picatinny Arsenal and Joint Base McGuire Dix-Lakehurst. She fought hard to increase service member pay, protect access to contraceptives for servicewomen, and was critical in removing sexual assault from the military chain of command. On the committee, she had a reputation for her ability to reach across the aisle to deliver bipartisan, common sense solutions for service members and their families.



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Governor-elect Mikie Sherrill

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