

Governor Phil Murphy

# Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Establishing the Department of Veterans Affairs

Posted on - 09/11/2025

*Legislation Will Reorganize the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMAVA)*

*Announces Vincent Solomeno as the Intended Nominee for Commissioner of the New Department of Veterans Affairs*

**TRENTON** – Governor Murphy today signed legislation that would establish a new cabinet-level Department of Veterans Affairs in New Jersey, reorganizing the existing Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMAVA).

“Veterans have selflessly fought for our hard-earned freedoms as Americans,” **said Governor Murphy**. “By establishing a department solely dedicated to the needs of Veterans, we will continue to ensure they have a seat at the table and direct access to the support and resources they deserve. Our Veterans and their families deserve nothing less.”

Currently, the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs manages both military operations and veterans’ services. Under this bill, the newly established Department of Veterans Affairs will exclusively focus on veteran-related matters, such as delivering 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.

“This realignment is a deliberate step toward strengthening operational efficiency, enhancing service delivery, and ensuring focused leadership in support of our Veterans and military communities,” **said Brigadier General Yvonne L. Mays, The Adjutant General of New Jersey and Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs**. “It underscores our unwavering commitment to provide each community with the dedicated resources, advocacy, and attention they deserve.”

The law takes effect 120 days after enactment, allowing for anticipatory administrative actions, and maintains existing veterans’ services without creating new programs or appropriations.

Governor Murphy also announced today that Vincent Solomeno is his intended nominee for Commissioner for the Department of Veterans Affairs once the law takes effect.

“Vincent Solomeno has dedicated his career to serving our veterans and their families,” **continued Governor Murphy**. “His years of leadership and experience will help support our service members effectively. I am confident he will

excel as the inaugural Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Affairs.”

“Under Governor’s Murphy’s leadership, the State of New Jersey continues to invest more, do more, and achieve more for Garden State veterans than at any time in our history,” **said Deputy Commissioner of Veterans Affairs, Vincent Solomeno.** “I am privileged to work beside teams of dedicated public servants. We are committed to building a robust cabinet-level Department of Veterans Affairs worthy of those that we serve.”

A U.S. Army Veteran, Vincent Solomeno currently serves as the Deputy Commissioner of Veterans Affairs and Administrator of Veterans Affairs for the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. Prior to this role, he served as Superintendent of the National Guard Training Center in Sea Girt and as Executive Officer to the Adjutant General and Commissioner of Military and Veterans Affairs. Solomeno has served on active duty during Hurricane Irene, Superstorm Sandy, and the statewide COVID-19 response, and he chairs the Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families. He earned his Bachelor of Science from the University of Scranton and a Master of Arts from the University of Amsterdam.

The prime sponsors of S4376/A5520 are Senator Joseph Vitale, Senator Joseph Cryan, Assemblywoman Cleopatra Tucker, Assemblyman Robert Karabinchak, and Assemblywoman Annette Quijano.

“New Jersey’s veterans deserve nothing less than a government fully committed to their well-being because of all that they sacrificed serving our nation,” **said Senator Joseph Vitale.** “Veterans need to know their voices are being heard and their needs prioritized. This bill reflects that commitment by giving them a dedicated seat at the table and a department that works only for them. It was an honor to have devoted nearly three years crafting this new cabinet-level position alongside my colleagues, Senators Cryan and Johnson, Assemblywoman Tucker, the Murphy administration, and veterans organizations.”

“Our veterans have made extraordinary sacrifices in service to our country, our security and our way of life,” **said Senator Joseph Cryan.** “They deserve more than our gratitude for answering the call to duty. They should get our continued commitment to their health and well-being with a department that is dedicated to their needs. The newly-created Department of Veterans Affairs will elevate veterans’ priorities, provide timely services, deliver benefits more effectively, and treat them with the dignity they have earned.”

“The fearless men and women who risked their lives to defend our country deserve to know that New Jersey has their backs as they navigate civilian life. With the creation of the Department of Veterans Affairs, we are affirming our commitment to supporting these heroes and their families,” **said Senator Gordon Johnson.** “This new agency will more efficiently connect our vets to critical services like healthcare and housing, and ensure veterans are duly considered and represented in all matters of state government. It’s about delivering the care, respect, and visibility they have earned in service to us all.”

“This bill is about building a better, more responsive system for veterans in New Jersey—one that puts their needs first, strengthens accountability, and ensures that no one who served our country is left to struggle,” **said Assemblywoman Cleopatra Tucker, Chair of the Assembly Military and Veterans’ Affairs Committee.** “By creating a standalone Department of Veterans Affairs, we’re making the kind of structural changes that will improve outcomes, restore trust, and honor the service of our veterans.”

“New Jersey’s veterans have given so much to our nation, and it is our responsibility to ensure they receive the care and support they deserve. As the son and brother of veterans, I know firsthand the importance of protecting and honoring those who have served,” **said Assemblyman Robert Karabinchak, Chair of the Assembly State and Local**

**Government Committee.** "Establishing a standalone Department of Veterans Affairs will centralize services, improve efficiency, and strengthen our commitment to those who served. This is a meaningful step forward for veterans and their families across our state."

"This legislation recognizes the unique needs of New Jersey's veterans by creating a dedicated cabinet-level department to serve them," **said Assemblywoman Annette Quijano.** "The new Department of Veterans Affairs will ensure veterans have a clear point of contact for the programs and services they rely on, and it demonstrates our ongoing commitment to honor their service with dedicated attention and resources."

"The VFW has supported this important piece of legislation since its inception," **said Jay Boxwell, NJ VFW Legislative Director.** "To have the new Commissioner of Veterans Affairs in a seat on the Governor's cabinet shows the commitment New Jersey has for its veterans. We look forward to working with the new leadership in the Department of Veteran Affairs."

"This change demonstrates a strong commitment to improving the resources, services, and overall support available to our veteran community. I am confident that it will contribute to enhanced outcomes for those who have served, addressing both current needs and long-term goals. As someone who deeply values the well-being of our veterans, I fully support this change and look forward to seeing its positive impact in the near future," **said Kelly Atkinson, Northern Region Vice President, National Montford Point Marine Association Inc.**

"By creating a dedicated Department of Veterans Affairs, the Governor and Legislature affirm their deep gratitude and commitment to ensuring every veteran receives the care, housing, and benefits they have earned, while military operations receive clear and focused oversight," **said Sharon McGreevey, Director of Veteran Services, New Jersey Reentry Corporation.**

"With the creation of a New Jersey Department of Veterans Affairs, New Jersey now joins other states in elevating the voice of Veterans in public programs and policy," **said Dan Channel, Commander, The American Legion Department of New Jersey.** "The selection of Vincent Solomeno to lead this important organization as its Acting Commissioner is an outstanding one for the Veterans of New Jersey. He is extremely qualified to transform state-delivered Veteran benefits and services. The American Legion Department of New Jersey looks forward to working with Mr. Solomeno and his team in assuring the Veterans of New Jersey are aware of the many state programs and services available to them, while also keeping him informed of the top issues and concerns they face."

"We firmly support Governor Phil Murphy's initiative to restructure the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs into two separate departments," **said David Pearson, Director of Outreach, Catholic Charities Veteran Services.** "This important step acknowledges the unique needs of our veterans and aims to build upon the critical services and support that they've been receiving from the Murphy Administration. Through this move, we can ensure that our veterans are receiving the comprehensive care and resources they most need, continuing to reflect our commitment to honor their sacrifices and improve their quality of life. This restructuring represents a vital move toward a more efficient and effective system that prioritizes the well-being of those who have served our country."

## Governor Phil Murphy

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