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Navy Veteran and Longtime Advocate Will Lead Newly Established Independent Office

TRENTON – Governor Mikie Sherrill today announced the nomination of Michael Embrich to serve as New Jersey’s first Veteran Advocate. Upon confirmation by the Senate, Embrich will lead the Office of the Veteran Advocate, which was created by the Legislature in 2025, to serve as an independent voice for New Jersey’s veteran community. His nomination comes as New Jersey’s new standalone Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) begins its first year of operations.

The new office will give veterans and their families a dedicated place to turn when they have concerns about their care or the services they receive. Although housed within the New Jersey Department of Veterans Affairs, the office will operate independently. The Veteran Advocate will provide oversight of the State’s veterans homes and other veterans facilities, with the authority to inspect their operations, investigate allegations of abuse or neglect, recommend improvements, and monitor corrective actions. The Advocate will also investigate broader concerns involving veterans services, help connect veterans with the benefits they have earned, and represent their interests before State and federal agencies.

“As a fellow Navy veteran, I understand that our obligation to those who served does not end when they take off the uniform. New Jersey’s veterans deserve a strong, independent voice focused entirely on their well-being and on ensuring government delivers the care, services, and support they have earned,” **said Governor Sherrill**. “Michael has spent his career fighting for veterans and military families at every level of government. His experience, integrity, and deep commitment to service make him the right person to become New Jersey’s first Veteran Advocate.”

Supporting servicemembers, veterans, and their families has been central to Governor Sherrill’s career in public service. In Congress, she secured measures to improve documentation of burn pit and other toxic exposures and help servicemembers transition to civilian life. As Governor, she signed an FY2027 budget that includes \$11 million for Bringing Veterans Home. Through the initiative, the State has helped permanently house more than 2,500 veterans and created a coordinated statewide system so every veteran facing a housing crisis can access stable housing.

“Veterans deserve services that are responsive, transparent, and worthy of the sacrifices they made for our country,” **said New Jersey Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner Vincent Solomeno**. “Michael brings a veteran’s perspective, decades of public-service experience, and a clear record of advocating for veterans and their families. The Department welcomes this new partnership, and we look forward to working with Michael while fully respecting the independence that is fundamental to his role.”

DVA has made documented improvements in care and quality of life at New Jersey’s Veterans Memorial Homes, including through investments in frontline staff, medical equipment, and new technology. All three homes now hold five-star overall ratings from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services – a testament to the dedicated staff who care for veterans, their spouses, and Gold Star Families each day.

“I am deeply honored to be nominated by Governor Sherrill to serve as New Jersey’s first Veteran Advocate,” **said Michael Embrich, nominee for Veteran Advocate**. “Governor Sherrill’s commitment to veterans is personal, and she has made supporting those who served a priority throughout her career. I look forward to serving as an independent and trusted voice for veterans and their families, working alongside Commissioner Solomeno and the Department of Veterans Affairs to strengthen services, promote accountability, and improve the lives of veterans across the Garden State.”

“We created the Office of the Veteran Advocate to ensure veterans and their families always have someone whose sole responsibility is to stand up for their needs, protect their well-being, and hold government accountable,” **said Senator Joe Cryan**. “I applaud the Governor for prioritizing our veteran community. Moving this nomination forward is an important step in fulfilling the promise of this new agency.”

Embrich is a U.S. Navy veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and a former policy advisor to the U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs. He served aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt and received the Meritorious Unit Commendation, Navy Unit Commendation, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, and other military awards and decorations.



Following his military service, Embrich began a career in public service and veterans advocacy. He held senior leadership positions in the New Jersey General Assembly, including serving as a Chief of Staff, and helped advocate for the passage of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008. He later served as Deputy Chief of Public Affairs for the U.S. Army and as an alternate to the U.S. Treasury Taxpayer Advocate for New Jersey.

Embrich has remained deeply involved in the veterans community throughout his career, including serving as State Commander of the New Jersey Catholic War Veterans and in other volunteer veterans-service roles. He has contributed to veterans policy discussions at both the state and federal levels, with a focus on health care, education, benefits, and the transition from military to civilian life.

Embrich earned a bachelor’s degree in history and a master’s degree in political science from Rutgers University.

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