



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# News Release

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## **New Members Appointed to VA Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans**

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced the appointment of four new members to the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans. The committee was chartered on November 2, 1994, and advises the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on the needs of the nation's 4.7 million minority Veterans on compensation, health care, rehabilitation, outreach and other benefits and programs administered by the VA. The committee assesses the needs of Veterans who are minority group members and recommends program improvements designed to meet their needs. The committee members are appointed to two or three-year terms. Minority Veterans comprise nearly 21 percent of the total Veteran population in the United States and its territories.

### **The new committee members are:**

**Melissa Castillo:** Navy Veteran of San Antonio, Texas. Served as the Assistant Regional Director for San Antonio Region, Veterans County Service Officer Association of Texas; Assistant Women Veterans Coordinator; Advisor to the US Army Survivor Outreach Services Program; and Advisor to the Alamo Community College District Veterans Affairs Committee. Currently serves as the Assistant Veterans Service Officer at the Bexar County Veterans Service Office in San Antonio, Texas, and is an accredited Veterans Service Officer.

**Benno Cleveland:** Army Veteran of Fairbanks, Alaska. Served two tours in Dong Tam, Vietnam where he earned a Purple Heart. He also served as Senior Vice Commander and Department Commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart. In recognition of his distinguished military service, the Alaska Federation of Natives bestowed him with their "Veteran of the Year" honors in 2014 at their Annual Convention in Anchorage. Mr. Cleveland also founded the Alaska Native Veterans Association and is currently serving as President.

**Ginger Miller:** Navy Veteran of Accokeek, Maryland, and former homeless disabled Veteran. Ms. Miller became Founder and CEO of two nonprofit organizations that serve Veterans and their families: John 14:2, Inc. and Women Veterans Interactive. She served as Chairwoman of the Prince George's County Veterans Commission; Commissioner, Maryland Commission for Women; member of the Maryland Veterans Resilience Advisory Council; and a member of the Maryland Caregivers Support Coordinating Council. She is currently a member of Disabled American Veterans.

**Xiomara Sosa:** Army Veteran of Summerville, South Carolina. Ms. Sosa is the Founder and Principal of XAS Consulting, LLC, an integrative mental healthcare and holistic wellness consulting firm. She served on the Women Veteran Social Justice board of directors; Military Partners and Families Veteran Initiative; the Semper Fidelis Health and Wellness Advisory Board; and a current member of the Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc.

### **The new members join current members:**

**Marvin Trujillo, Jr.,** Committee Chairman, Marine Corps Veteran

**Many-Bears Grinder,** Col. (USA-Ret)

**Patricia Jackson-Kelley,** Lt. Col. (USA-Ret)

**Librado Rivas,** Command Sgt. Maj. (USA-Ret)

**Teresita Smith,** Sgt. First Class (USA-Ret)

**Rebecca Stone,** Staff Sgt. (USA-Ret)

**Cornell Wilson, Jr.,** Maj. Gen. (USMC-Ret)

**Anthony Woods,** Army Veteran

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