New York State Women Veterans Advisory Committee
Annual Report – 2024
Submitted to the Governor and Legislature
February 15, 2025

I. Introduction

The New York State Women Veterans Advisory Committee is committed to advocating for the needs of women Veterans across the state. In accordance with Veterans Services Law Article 1 § 20(b), this report outlines the Committee's activities in 2024, highlights the contributions and challenges of women Veterans, and presents recommendations to enhance support and resources for this vital population. The Committee's meetings began in April 2024. Currently, there are six active appointees from across New York State.

II. Demographics of Women Veterans in New York State

Women Veterans represent a growing and diverse segment of the Veteran community. As of 2023:

- Approximately **65,000 women Veterans** reside in New York State according to a New York Senate bill from 2025. www.nysenate.gov
- **Age Distribution:** The majority are between **35 and 55 years old**, with an increasing number of post-9/11 Veterans.
- **Service Background:** Women Veterans of NYS have served in every branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, including active duty, National Guard, and Reserves.
- **Racial and Ethnic Diversity:** The population is highly diverse, with White, African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American women

III. Contributions of Women Veterans

Women Veterans have played a critical role in defending the nation and contributing to society. In 2024, their impact included:

- **Service in Combat and Leadership Roles:** Women have served in frontline combat roles, intelligence, medical services, logistics, and aviation.
- **Workforce and Economic Contributions:** Many women Veterans have transitioned into careers in healthcare, business, law enforcement, and public service.
- **Community Engagement:** Women Veterans continue to lead and support veteran advocacy initiatives, mentorship programs, and nonprofit organizations.

IV. Unique Needs of Women Veterans

Despite their significant contributions, women Veterans face distinct challenges, including:

- **Healthcare Access:** Gaps in women's health services, including reproductive care, mental health support, and gender-specific treatment within the VA system, and in the case of young Veterans, childcare availability during medical appointments if traveling a distance to VA for care is involved.
- **Military Sexual Trauma (MST) and PTSD:** Many women Veterans struggle with MST-related PTSD, requiring specialized counseling and support services.
- **Employment and Economic Stability:** A higher rate of underemployment in women Veterans than male Veterans and barriers to career advancement.

  In 2023, the unemployment rate for female Veterans was 3.2%, higher than the 2.7% for male Veterans. (www.bls.gov) Additionally, in August 2024, the unemployment rate for female Veterans spiked to 7%, while the rate for all Veterans was 3.5% (www.military.com).

- **Homelessness and Housing Insecurity:** Women Veterans are at an increased risk of homelessness due to financial instability and lack of accessible housing programs.

V. Recommendations

1. To address these challenges, the Committee recommends the following actions:

   Expand Healthcare Services: Increase knowledge and improve access to gender-specific healthcare services at VA facilities, ensure all women Veterans receive comprehensive care and facilitate this by providing childcare where feasible and/or transportation in transit complicated areas and in remote NYS regions.

2. **Enhance Employment Programs**: Further expand outreach and communication about these programs, strengthen and improve access to job placement initiatives, entrepreneurship training, and leadership development tailored for women Veterans.
3. **Improve Housing Assistance**: Develop targeted housing support programs, including transitional housing for single mothers with children and rental assistance.
4. **Increase Awareness and Outreach**: Implement statewide awareness campaigns, with agency-to-agency and with public and private partners cooperation in the sharing of women Veterans' outreach information, to ensure the widest networks are contacted to ultimately reach NYS women Veterans. Their families, their friends, their communities, and public officials are alerted to the women Veterans benefits, plus available resources, and to inform the women Veterans on how to *most* easily take steps to access them.
5. **Strengthen Mental Health Support**: Expand MST counseling services, trauma-informed care, and peer support networks and further expand via decentralizing delivery of these programs wherever possible to remote areas.

VI. Outreach Activities of the Advisory Committee in 2024

The committee in this first year engaged in multiple outreach efforts to connect with and support women Veterans, including:

- **Collaboration with Veteran Organizations** to Communicate Availability of the ACWV and Veteran Benefits: Partnered with the VA, New York State Division of Veterans' Services, and nonprofits to enhance services. Partnered with the director of SUNY Westchester Student Veteran Services and its radio network staff on a test to broaden our reach to the women Veterans in the Student Veterans Service networks within the vast area's veteran students, colleges and universities listening public.
- **Social media and Public Awareness Campaigns:** Increased digital outreach to share resources and encourage women Veterans to access their benefits.
- **Hour of Power Initiative (2024):** Launched a dedicated listening session to hear directly from women Veterans about their concerns, challenges, and needs. This initiative provided a platform for Veterans to share their voices and shape future committee actions.

VII. Conclusion

Women Veterans have made invaluable contributions to our state and nation, yet they continue to face challenges that require targeted solutions. The New York State Women Veterans Advisory Committee remains dedicated to advocating for their needs, reaching out to women Veterans where they are, collecting their concerns and needs for services, and facilitate the recognition and support they deserve. We urge the Governor and Legislature to prioritize the recommendations outlined in this report to improve the lives of women Veterans across the state.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dr. Nneka Bell
Chairwoman, New York State Women Veterans Advisory Committee