



PRESS RELEASE

Mike DeWine, Governor Deborah Ashenhurst, Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Women Veterans to Share Stories of Service In Recognition of Women's History Month, Vietnam Veterans Honored

COLUMBUS – March is upon us, and its arrival evokes recognition of Women's History Month. The Ohio Department of Veterans Services (ODVS) will help celebrate its significance when five Ohio women veterans come together to tell their stories and share their experiences of life in the military and beyond – and how service to the nation and their communities helped shape their world today.

The panel discussion will be held on Friday, March 22, 11 a.m., at the Ohio History Connection, 800 E. 17th Ave., Columbus, OH 43211. The general public is encouraged to attend this free event entitled *Women Veterans: Their Service Continues*.

Additionally, in coordination with Vietnam Veterans Day, Vietnam-era veterans are encouraged to attend so they can be formally presented with a special commemorative lapel pin. ODVS Director Deborah Ashenhurst will share remarks expressing the importance of honoring Vietnam veterans.

The women veterans' discussion will include the following topics:

- Their motivations for joining the military
- Their challenges and opportunities in training and in war
- Their continued mission of service after service through volunteerism, advocacy, professional distinction and public service
- Their life lessons in tenacity and adaptability

The following distinguished women veterans will participate on the panel:

- Emcee **Angela Beltz**, Army, Chair of the Ohio Women Veterans Advisory Committee
- Moderator **Claudia Foss**, Air Force, Vice Chair of the Ohio Women Veterans Advisory Committee
- Panelists: **Deborah Ashenhurst**
 Cassie Barlow
 Rebecca O'Connor
 Dana Robinson-Street
 Nancy Schools

Admission to the Ohio History Connection for the panel discussion is free for veterans and military members. Other guests who mention the panel discussion while purchasing tickets will receive a \$2 discount rate – \$8 for adults, \$7 for seniors (60 and over) and \$3 for children ages 6-12. Group rates also are available. Members and children 5 and under may enter for free; parking is free. The event is open to the public. No reservation necessary.

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"The Trusted Voice for Veterans"

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Background on Women Veterans in Ohio

More than 67,000 women veterans reside in Ohio. Women have served with distinction in every war in a variety of capacities. In the 1980s, military specialties previously closed to women were opened, putting women service members much closer to direct combat; their roles further expanded during the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Today, women service members are directly engaged in the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. Currently, 9.4 percent of our military members are women, and it is projected that by 2043 the figure will grow to 16.3 percent.

Biographical Information on the Panelists

Deborah Ashenhurst, Army

Prior to being appointed as Director of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services in January, 2019, Maj. Gen. Deborah Ashenhurst (U.S. Army, retired) served as the Senior Vice President, Military Strategy of R2 Associates. Ashenhurst retired from the U.S. Army and the National Guard in October 2015 after more than 37 years of service. In that time, she served at all levels of command. In 2011, she was appointed by then-Ohio Gov. John Kasich to the cabinet-level position of Adjutant General of the State of Ohio, commanding the 17,000 service members of the Ohio National Guard, the Ohio Naval Militia and the Ohio Military Reserve. She served as Adjutant General until January 2015. Her career culminated by serving as a Special Assistant to the Vice Chief, National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C. Ashenhurst received numerous awards and decorations, including the Army Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal (with one Silver and one Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster) and the Joint Service Commendation Medal. Gen. Ashenhurst resides with her husband, Col. Jim Ashenhurst (U.S. Army, retired), in Hilliard, Ohio.

Cassie Barlow, Air Force

Cassie B. Barlow served in the U.S. Air Force from 1988 to 2014. She is laser-focused on military and veteran initiatives through a variety of avenues. As the Director of Aerospace Professional Development for the Southwestern Council on Higher Education, Ms. Barlow assists veterans with job readiness and placement as well as higher education course structure and post-graduation options. She founded and chairs the Greater Miami Valley myVeteran Community, a consortium of non-profit and governmental agencies focused on improving services to veterans in the Dayton region. She also is the creator of the Veterans Moving Forward Annual Resource Fair, which is now in its third year. As a Greater Dayton United Way volunteer, Barlow spearheaded a research program which will result in VetsLink – a 24/7/365 access to resources and information for veterans across Miami Valley. She served as the Executive Director for the Ohio Federal Jobs Commission, which developed a plan to outline the importance of federal military installations in Ohio with a veteran workforce component focusing on attraction and skill development for federal jobs. Barlow also is the president of the Miami Valley Military Affairs Association, the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce Military and Government Affairs Committee, and The Abilities Connection. She earned the following degrees: bachelor's degree in psychology from Georgetown University; master's degree in clinical psychology from Chapman University; Doctor of Philosophy in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from Rice University; master's degree in Military Operational Art and Science from Air Command; and Staff College and master's degree in national security from Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University.

Dana Robinson-Street, Navy

Dr. Dana Robinson-Street served in the United States Navy in Desert Storm. Since retiring from the Navy, she has devoted her post-military years to helping improve the lives of veterans, ensuring that they have access to services and benefits and ensuring that they have a healthy transition from military service. As a medical provider and community service advocate, she works to improve the lives of

veterans from all eras of military service. In addition to providing medical care to patients, Dr. Robinson-Street conducts research on the rapidly expanding challenges of America's opioid crisis. She serves as the manager of a primary care/urgent care clinic and provides medical care to military members and residents of Greater Columbus. She is a recognized subject matter expert on the challenges veterans face when transitioning from military service back into civilian life. She has lobbied on Capitol Hill on behalf of veterans on at least six different occasions. She served as the Delegate Chair for the Women Veterans Rock Civic Leadership Institute's Health and Wellness delegation. Her "Scooters for Veterans Campaign" has provided more than \$12,000 worth of scooters to mobility-impaired veterans free of charge. Dr. Robinson-Street is a life member of the VFW Chapter 10523 and the U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce. She serves as President of the Women Veterans Rock National Leadership Team for the State of Ohio. She works tirelessly on her current passion – to bring a veterans home to the Greater Columbus region. Among her many degrees, Dr. Robinson-Street has earned a Doctorate in Nursing Practice from the University of Alabama as well as a Master of Science in Nursing and a Bachelor of Science, Cum Laude, from the University of Milwaukee.

Nancy Schools, Marine Corps

Nancy Schools enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1970 during the Vietnam War, when woman Marines were no "dime a dozen." In fact, there were only about 2,000 in the entire Corps. Nancy completed boot camp at Paris Island, N.C., and had volunteered for a Vietnam station, which then meant the American Embassy in Saigon. Instead, Ms. Schools was assigned a position at the Pentagon working as the Secretary to John Warner, who at the time was serving as Secretary of the Navy while married to Elizabeth Taylor. Ms. Schools recounts Secretary Warner having his movie star wife chauffeured to and from the Pentagon for her safety, and having learning the terminology of the military through trial and error. Ms. Schools found out that when she was told to "burn" certain classified information, they meant to make copies not to actually burn them. She also had the privilege to meet many dignitaries including President Nixon during her service. She spent her entire enlistment working in the Pentagon. Schools discharged from the USMC in 1971 and enrolled in Roanoke Chowan Technical College in Ahoskie, N.C., and received her Associate's Degree in Police Science and worked as a case worker for Comp Drug. She has two daughters and five grandchildren and has lived most of her life in Columbus, Ohio.

Rebecca L. O'Connor, Air Force

Brig. Gen. Rebecca L. O'Connor is the Ohio Air National Guard Chief of Staff. In this role, she administers and supervises the Ohio Air National Guard State Headquarters staff in their support to subordinate units. Her leadership and oversight ensure the mission readiness of more than 5,100 personnel in the Ohio Air National Guard's four wings and six geographically separated units who are poised to support community, state, and federal missions. In 1993, General O'Connor earned her commission through the Academy of Military Science, McGhee Tyson ANGB, Tenn., and was assigned to the 162nd Tactical Fighter Squadron as an Intelligence Officer. Throughout her career, General O'Connor has served in numerous operational and staff positions to include Targeting Officer, Operations Intelligence Officer, Senior Intelligence Officer, and Chief of Training and Squadron Operations. She has commanded units at the squadron and group level, serving as commander of the 124th Intelligence Squadron and the 178th Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Group, Ohio Air National Guard. She has also served as Vice Wing Commander, 178th Wing, Ohio Air National Guard. Prior to her current position, General O'Connor served as the Joint Director of Intelligence, Ohio National Guard Joint Force Headquarters in Columbus, Ohio.