



## **Elisa Basnight, JD, MPA**

Elisa Basnight, JD, MPA, was appointed Director of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Center for Women Veterans in October 2013. In this role, she is the primary advisor to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on programs and issues related to women Veterans.

Ms. Basnight serves as an ex-officio member on the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) and also serves as the Department's representative on the White House Council on Women and Girls.

Prior to her appointment, Ms. Basnight, Esquire, served as corporate commercial counsel at Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney in Philadelphia, PA, focusing on general corporate, commercial contracts; small, women, Veterans and minority-owned businesses; and technology, and was an associate with Debevoise & Plimpton LLP in New York, NY, where her practice focused primarily on mergers and acquisition in domestic and international markets. Prior to her legal work, Ms. Basnight served as the Director of Resource Center for Workforce Essentials, Inc. in Clarksville, TN, where she developed and led the conception and implementation of an innovative career development center to assist downsized U.S. Servicemembers with redeployment as Veterans into civilian employment.

Ms. Basnight graduated from the U. S. Military Academy – West Point in 1991, making her the first African-American woman graduate from the state of Wisconsin. As a newly commissioned military intelligence officer, she completed Airborne School and other trainings, and received a Joint Chiefs of Staff appointment. Ms. Basnight served both overseas and in the United States, on active duty with the U.S Army and in the U.S. Army Reserves.

Ms. Basnight's lifelong passion for helping others is evident in her public service and private sector activities. She is a member of the U.S. Army Philadelphia Community Advisory Board, a former member of the West Point Association of Graduates annual award selection committees (Thayer and Distinguished Graduate) 2012-2013, and a former term member of the Council on Foreign Relations; authored the 2008 Veterans Day op-ed "Remember the Veterans;" provided commentary for and participated in HGTV's "Change the World: American Heroes Project;" engaged in volunteer work with WHY?-- a local media outlet--on its 2009 "Impact of War" series; and in 2005, was appointed by New Jersey's governor to serve on its Military and Veterans Affairs Transition Policy Task Force, where she served as co-chair. Ms. Basnight is the founder of Girls Affairs Transition Policy Task Force, a nonprofit with the mission to shatter stereotypes and expand opportunities for girls and young women, especially those from underserved communities, with a particular focus on STEM fields. In 2009, she was recognized as a Woman of Distinction by the Philadelphia Business Journal and has received special recognition and awards for her service to girls, women and Veterans.

Ms. Basnight is also a graduate of Boston University-Brussels, Rutgers Law School-Newark and Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government--earning a masters degree in public administration and selected to be a Zuckerman Fellow 2006-2007.

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## **Department of Veterans Affairs**

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**Director, Center for  
Women Veterans**