Senior Executive Biography

Melissa A. Bryant

Chair, Board of Directors
Minority Veterans of America

Melissa A. Bryant is a transformative senior executive leader and strategist with 20+ years of experience adeptly creating and executing executive branch, nonprofit, advocacy, political and military strategies. She possesses a deep reservoir of management, communications, legislative, policy, planning, and operations expertise resulting in successful, innovative, and integrated campaigns with a proven track record of advancement of U.S. and international goals.

Melissa was appointed to the Biden-Harris Administration in early February 2021 and served until August 2023 as the Senior Advisor for strategic engagement to the Secretary for Veterans Affairs (VA) focused on the development, adoption, and implementation of Department-wide programs and policies affecting overall operations of VA. Lauded for her work as the Department's senior official responsible for holistic coordination of stakeholder engagement, strategic communications and data-driven outreach on behalf of the enterprise, one of her many accomplishments was her visionary commissioning and piloting of a first-of-its-kind strategic outreach module—an interactive, web-based tool marrying multiple overlays of data used by VA and other executive agencies to capture veteran stakeholders by locality for specific and targeted outreach—a game changer for VA marketing and communication efforts with revolutionary future use cases. She came into the senior advisor role building upon her success managing one of the U.S. government's largest communications directorates as Acting Assistant Secretary and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at VA.

Ms. Bryant is widely recognized for championing causes impacting women and minority service members and veterans, highlighting the distinct challenges this growing population faces while advocating smart policy and legislative solutions. Prior to her time at VA, she campaigned as a surrogate for the victorious Biden-Harris Presidential campaign as a member of the Women Veterans Council for Biden and she delivered expert witness testimony to the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel as a legislative and media spokesperson for the grassroots movement #IAmVanessaGuillen, aka the military's #MeToo movement, focusing national attention towards Military Sexual Trauma and resulting in rapid introduction of legislation to alleviate the military sexual assault epidemic. She was the National Legislative Director for The American Legion and previously the Chief Policy Officer for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the head of IAVA's policy division and all its Washington, DC operations, overseeing the legislative, research, and government affairs departments. She has provided remarks in dozens of press conferences, participated as both a panelist and moderator in a variety of venues, delivered numerous oral and written testimonies before Congressional and Administration hearings, as well as conducted live and taped interviews on MSNBC, FOX News, CNN, NPR, CBS Radio, PBS NewsHour, C-SPAN Washington Journal, HLN, local television segments, web-based and print articles, and much more.

A former Army Captain and Operation Iraqi Freedom combat veteran, her extensive record of public service also includes critical roles in both military and civil service as a senior intelligence officer. As a Department of Defense and Intelligence Community plans, policy, and operations expert, she served in key leadership positions with the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Joint Staff, the United States Military Academy, and Army Intelligence. She was successful in building "coalitions of the willing" to advance operational and strategic objectives while developing and implementing plans and policy for the defense intelligence community.

Melissa was appointed in 2023 to the Board of Directors for Minority Veterans of America and VetsinTech, and serves on the research advisory board of Blue Star Families. She was named Woman Veteran of the Year 2023 by VetsInTech, one of HillVets 100 in 2020, and an Aspen Institute Ideas Festival Scholar in 2018; her civil and military service awards include the VA Meritorious Service Medal, the Joint Civilian Service Commendation Medal, the Army Meritorious Service Medal, the Joint Service Commendation Medal, plus dozens more accolades and honors. A native of Philadelphia, PA, Ms. Bryant is a third-generation combat Veteran, an ROTC Distinguished Military Graduate with a BA in Political Science *cum laude* from Hampton University, is an alumna of Howard University School of Law, and holds an MA in Policy Management from the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University.