

ELISA BASNIGHT, JD, MPA

Director, Center for Women Veterans
Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, D.C.

Elisa Basnight 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, Esq. served as corporate commercial counsel at Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania focusing on general corporate; commercial contracts; small, women, veterans and minority-owned businesses; and technology. She was an associate with Debevoise & Plimpton LLP in New York, New York where her practice focused 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, Tennessee where she developed and led the conception and implementation of an innovative career development center to assist downsized service members 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 exhibited in her public service and private sector activities. She is a member of the U.S. Army Philadelphia Community Advisory Board, a former term member of the Council on Foreign Relations; author of the 2008 Veterans Day op-ed "Remember the Veterans;" and provided commentary for, and participated in, HGTV's "Change the World: American Heroes Project." Ms. Basnight is the founder of Girls Action Network, Inc. a nonprofit whose mission is to shatter stereotypes and expand opportunities for girls and young women from underserved communities with particular interests in 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, where she earned a Master's degree in public administration and was selected a Zuckerman Fellow 2006-2007.