



## The Importance of Female Veterans

On Veterans Day (November 11), our country will honor all veterans for their courageous and dedicated service to keeping our nation safe at home and abroad. At present, 15% of the military is comprised of females.<sup>1</sup> Women veterans currently total 1.8 million nationwide and are the fastest growing group of veterans.<sup>2</sup> As of 2008, Ohio had 60,344 female veterans of all races and ethnicities<sup>3</sup> and was one of 9 states that, together, housed 50% of female veterans.<sup>1</sup> Though some of these women are veterans of previous wars and operations, many recently returned from combat. The largest percentage of female veterans, 11%, are returning from the Middle East after having risked their lives to serve in Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom.<sup>4</sup>

The number of women veterans is expected to continue to rise. Recent studies have shown that, as of 2020, there will be an estimated 1.9 million female veterans in the United States, and they will make up 10% of veterans<sup>1</sup>—compared to the current 7.4%.<sup>4</sup> Female veterans tend to be younger and suffer lower mortality rates than men, hence the rapid growth in their numbers<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, women have been entering the armed services in larger numbers than in previous years, also helping to increase their percentage and role in the military.<sup>1</sup> These statistics indicate that females will continue to play a vital role in our nation's armed forces both now and in coming years.

Women have served heroically in every war since the American Revolution. One such female veteran is Sharon Ann Lane. Lane, originally a resident of Zanesville, OH, was a nurse during the Vietnam War. After graduating from nursing school, Lane enlisted in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps Reserve where she was soon sent to the 312<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital at Chu Lai in Vietnam. Described as an “emotionally and physically challenging” ward to serve in, Lane took care of the most seriously wounded soldiers in the region. Lane became the only military nurse during the war to be killed by enemy fire when her hospital was hit by Vietcong missiles. For her valiant service to our country, she was awarded the Purple Heart and numerous other decorations.<sup>5</sup>

The Governor's Office for Women's Initiatives and Outreach would like to salute these female veterans for all that they have done and all that they continue to do to keep our country secure.

For more information about female veterans and resources available to them, click here:

<http://www1.va.gov/womenvet/>

<sup>1</sup>Business and Professional Women's Foundation. "Women Veterans in Transition". [http://www.bpwusa.org/files/public/Demographics\\_Appendix\\_LaunchReport.pdf](http://www.bpwusa.org/files/public/Demographics_Appendix_LaunchReport.pdf), 2007.

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Census Bureau. "Facts for Features." [http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts\\_for\\_features\\_special\\_editions/014342.html](http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/014342.html), October 13, 2009.

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. "Women Veterans Population October 2009." <http://www1.va.gov/womenvet/page.cfm?pg=53>, October 16, 2009.

<sup>4</sup>Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards. "Women Veterans Health Care: The Changing Face of Women Veterans." <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/womenshealth/facts.asp>, April 22, 2009.

<sup>5</sup>The Army Historical Foundation. "Army History Center." <http://www.armyhistory.org/ahf2.aspx?pgID=877&id=129&exCompID=56>, 2009.