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Dr. Grace Williams Named Veteran of the Year for the 61st Assembly District



Assemlyman Jose Medina with Grace Williams, City of Perris Economic Development Director, at the State Capitol in Sacramento, where she was honored as the 61st Assembly District Veteran of the Year.

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Grace Williams, the City of Perris Economic Development Director, was named Veteran of the Year for the 61st Assembly District and received her honor in a recent ceremony in Sacramento.

Assemblyman Jose Medina, D-Riverside, presented Williams with a Certificate of Recognition for her contributions to Perris, which include working to bring a job-training center to Downtown and partnering with veterans groups to create an armed forces memorial honoring local residents.

From 2003-11, Williams served as a human resources specialist with the Army National Guard.

"I am honored and humbled to receive this award," Williams said. "I am more than proud to represent the City of Perris and to serve this community."

The 61st Assembly District includes Perris, Moreno Valley, portions of Riverside and several unincorporated communities bordering those cities.

Medina has long and deep ties to education and workforce development in California. A former educator who chairs the Assembly higher education committee, he praised Williams for spearheading the City's workforce development efforts.

"Grace Williams is a very dynamic individual who I was very pleased to meet and who is a great representative for the City of Perris," Medina said. "I was impressed by her and I look forward to working with her for the betterment of the City of Perris."

Medina cited the ongoing efforts to bring a skills center to First and D streets, a project that hopefully becomes reality in 2020.

The City is seeking \$6.5 million in federal funds for the center, which would provide employers the opportunity to hire and train prospective workers—including military veterans—in a variety of fields, including building trades, aerospace, defense industries, manufacturing and logistics.



The Certificate of Recognition presented to Grace Williams after she was named Veteran of the Year for the 61st Assembly District.

Perris already is partnering with trade schools, colleges, non-profit organizations and the military as it pursues the job center.

"There are many, many highly skilled and technical jobs—like welding and auto technicians—that do not require a college degree," Medina said. "A lot of them are going unfilled. I am pleased that Perris is working to address this critical situation."

Williams joined the City of Perris in 2017, taking the reins of the City's economic development efforts following a stint as planning and economic development director at the March Joint Powers Authority. She earned a PhD in Public Policy from USC.

During her time in the military, Williams said she learned a great deal about the physical and psychological impact caused by extended deployments from speaking to veterans sent to war zones.

"It's impactful. It's life-changing," she said.

Since joining the City, Williams has reached out to veterans groups to create a monument honoring all Perris residents who have served in the military and those who were killed while in uniform.

She is working with the local Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion and Inland Empire Buffalo Soldier Heritage Association to honor Perris men and women in uniform. Buffalo Soldiers were black troops who served in the West following the Civil War and built roads and bridges and strung telegraph wire, in the process opening the American frontier to thousands of settlers at the end of the 19th Century.

Williams could not reveal specifics about the planned memorial but said it would honor veterans who served in all branches of the U.S. military. The City hopes to complete the memorial by 2020.



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