

Aspen Ideas Selects IAVA's Melissa Bryant as 2018 Festival Scholar

NEW YORK, NY (June 26, 2018) – Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the leading voice of the Post-9/11 generation of veterans, is proud to share that [Chief Policy Officer, Melissa Bryant](#), has been named a 2018 Aspen Ideas Festival Scholar and will be attending the event this week in Aspen, Colorado as part of an elite group of 300 diverse leaders from all over the United States and 30 different countries selected for their work, accomplishments, and ability to transform ideas into action.

Presented by the Aspen Institute in partnership with The Atlantic magazine, the Aspen Ideas Festival is the nation's premier, public gathering place for leaders from around the globe and across many disciplines to present and discuss the ideas and issues that both shape our lives and challenge our times. It runs through June 30.

"Melissa is one of the most important rising leaders in America. She has quickly established herself as an unparalleled force for our movement-and for all Americans," **said Paul Rieckhoff, Founder and CEO of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America** . "We're thrilled to have Melissa featured in the Aspen Ideas community this week. This honor is recognition not only of her wide array of accomplishments, but also her potential to help solve the world's most pressing problems at the highest level. She has been essential driving public awareness on all our top advocacy priorities-and especially support for women vets, fighting veteran suicide and burn pits. Veterans everywhere are inspired by her achievements on behalf of our community and nation at this critical time in history. Melissa represents the future of American leadership. And we appreciate Aspen's recognition of her and the importance of the veterans community."

Melissa leads IAVA's policy division, spearheading the development of the organization's annual policy agenda and advocacy campaigns and leads IAVA's engagement with the White House, and government agencies, particularly the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs and other Veteran and Military Service Organizations. This recognition as an Aspen Ideas Festival Scholar further underscores how Melissa's leadership is an example for young people everywhere.

"It's truly humbling to be recognized alongside such remarkable leaders and citizens as an Aspen Ideas Festival Scholar," **said Melissa Bryant** . "My entire life has been a commitment to service and pursuit of opportunities to make the greatest impact for the greater good. The Aspen Institute is known for bringing together the world's premiere thought leaders and I'm eager to engage with and learn from them as I look to tackle future challenges."

A former Army Captain and Operation Iraqi Freedom combat veteran originally from Philadelphia, Melissa has an extensive record of public service, having

served on both active duty and in the civil service as an intelligence officer prior to joining IAVA. A plans, policy, and operations expert with 15 combined years of experience in the federal government, she has 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 and intelligence communities.

Melissa is a frequent voice in the media, an ROTC Distinguished Military Graduate and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science cum laude from Hampton University, is an alumna of Howard University School of Law, and also holds a Master of Arts in Policy Management from Georgetown University.