



## PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** May 2, 2021

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### **Partnership for Public Service announces 2021 Service to America Medals finalists**

*The 2021 “Oscars” of government service will honor the heroes of the COVID-19 pandemic response and other outstanding public servants.*

**WASHINGTON** – The nonpartisan, nonprofit Partnership for Public Service today announced the 2021 [Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medals](#) (Sammies) finalists, a group of 29 exceptional federal employees who have helped make the nation healthier, safer and more prosperous.

“For each of the unprecedented challenges we have faced in the last year, dedicated public servants have worked behind the scenes to move our country forward, heal our nation and strengthen our democracy,” **said Max Stier, president and CEO of the Partnership for Public Service.** “The 2021 Service to America Medals finalists have shown tremendous commitment to the public good, and they, like all public servants, deserve our support and recognition.”

The Sammies are the premier awards program recognizing America’s best in government. This year, the Partnership is adding a COVID-19 Response medal to recognize the extraordinary federal workers who played a leading role in responding to the pandemic and saving lives.

The accomplishments recognized in the COVID-19 Response category include the creation of federal programs to increase COVID-19 testing in underserved communities and participation by these communities in coronavirus vaccine trials; groundbreaking research that led to the development and emergency approval of highly effective vaccines in record time; and the repatriation of more than 100,000 Americans who were stranded in countries all over the world when borders were closed and airports shut down.

In addition to the COVID-19 Response award, this year’s finalists are contenders for six other Service to America Medals. Award categories include the Paul A. Volcker Career Achievement medal; Emerging Leaders; Science and Environment; Safety, Security and International Affairs; Management Excellence; and Federal Employee of the Year. Winners will be announced in fall 2021.

The 2021 finalists’ outstanding achievements include leading a first-of-its-kind government team that worked with technology companies to combat misinformation that threatened the integrity of the 2020 census; successfully leading federal assistance for the 2020-21 presidential transition in the midst of the pandemic and a disputed election; overseeing the landing of a rover on Mars, a successful U.S. flight to the International Space Station and planning to put the first woman and first person of color on the

Moon; and launching a program that provides housing assistance and social services to young people aging out of foster care to prevent them from becoming homeless.

A list of the 29 Service to America Medals finalists is attached.

On Wednesday, May 5, at 12:30 p.m. EDT, the Partnership and Axios will air a virtual event to recognize the 2021 Service to America Medal finalists.

All 29 finalists are also eligible for the Service to America Medals People's Choice Award. Beginning Sunday, May 2, at 6 a.m. EDT, members of the public can [vote online](#) for the federal employee they believe has made the most significant contributions in public service. The People's Choice winner will be announced in the summer.

In addition, the Partnership will award its fourth annual Spirit of Service Award, which shines a spotlight on individuals outside the federal workforce who have made significant contributions to public service. This year, the award will go to Laurene Powell Jobs, founder and president of the Emerson Collective, who is widely recognized for her leadership in addressing systemic inequities and injustices in our society. Powell Jobs founded College Track, a college completion program that supports low-income, first-generation students; and Emerson Collective, which deploys a range of tools—from impact investing to philanthropy to advocacy—to lift up entrepreneurs, leaders, innovators and creators working to build a more just and equitable world.

The Service to America Medal recipients will be chosen by a prestigious committee that includes Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa); Rep. Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.); Rep. John Katko (R-N.Y.); Anne Finucane, vice chairman at Bank of America; Mariko Silver, president and CEO of the Henry Luce Foundation; Stephanie Mehta, editor-in-chief of Fast Company; Wayne Frederick, Howard University president; Michael Lewis, New York Times bestselling author of “The Fifth Risk”; and additional leaders from government, the media, academia, the private sector and the philanthropic community.

The premier and national sponsors for the 2021 Service to America Medals include Mrs. Ronnie F. Heyman and family and Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Renamed the Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medals in 2010 to commemorate the organization's founder, the program has honored more than 500 outstanding federal employees since its inception in 2002. More information about the program and the 2021 finalists is available at [servicetoamericamedals.org](http://servicetoamericamedals.org).

During the past 19 years, the nonpartisan, nonprofit Partnership for Public Service has been dedicated to making the federal government more effective. We work across administrations to help transform the way government operates by increasing collaboration, accountability, efficiency and innovation. Visit [ourpublicservice.org](http://ourpublicservice.org) to learn more. Follow us on social @PublicService and subscribe today to get the latest federal news, information on upcoming Partnership programs and events, and more.

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## Paul A. Volcker Career Achievement Category

This medal recognizes a federal employee for leading significant and sustained accomplishments throughout a federal career of 20 or more years.

<p><b>C. Mark Eakin, Ph.D.</b> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration College Park, MD</p>	<p>Led development of a satellite-based monitoring system that provides accurate forecasts and early warnings to environmental officials worldwide at a time when rising ocean temperatures threaten the health of coral reefs.</p>
<p><b>Paul Friday</b> Census Bureau Suitland, MD</p>	<p>During six decades of federal service, invented, engineered and implemented systems that enabled the Census Bureau to more accurately tabulate and analyze data on paper census forms, speeding the process and saving millions of dollars.</p>
<p><b>Evan R. Kwerel, Ph.D.</b> Federal Communications Commission Washington, D.C.</p>	<p>Pioneered the use of competitive spectrum auctions to allocate the public airwaves for sound, data and video transmissions, helping fuel the digital revolution while adding more than \$200 billion to the government's coffers.</p>
<p><b>Gregory M. Ruiz, Ph.D.</b> Smithsonian Institution Edgewater, MD</p>	<p>Played a major role over three decades highlighting the environmental harm caused by the marine transport of invasive species, resulting in a federal reporting system, enforcement policies and improved shipboard management practices.</p>
<p><b>Anne Schuchat, M.D.</b> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Atlanta, GA</p>	<p>As one of the nation's leading infectious disease experts, has led numerous high-profile and consequential disease outbreak investigations to protect public health and save countless lives.</p>



## COVID-19 Response Category

This medal recognizes a federal employee or team for their outstanding efforts to support Americans' health, safety and economic security during the COVID-19 pandemic.

<p><b>Ian Brownlee and the Interagency COVID Repatriation team</b> Department of State Washington, D.C.</p>	<p>Created and managed a State Department-led task force that repatriated more than 100,000 Americans who were stranded in countries all over the world when borders were closed and airports shut down because of the coronavirus pandemic.</p>
<p><b>Virginia K. Busby, Dianne Garibotto, Camille Privett and the Economic Impact Payment team</b> Internal Revenue Service Atlanta, GA (Busby); Andover, MA (Garibotto); Kansas City, MO (Privett)</p>	<p>Expertly orchestrated the disbursement of hundreds of billions of dollars to tens of millions of people adversely affected by the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.</p>
<p><b>Kizzmekia S. Corbett, Ph.D. and Barney S. Graham, M.D., Ph.D.</b> National Institutes of Health Bethesda, MD</p>	<p>Conducted groundbreaking research that led to the development of highly effective vaccines in record time that are protecting hundreds of millions of people from contracting the deadly coronavirus that swept across the globe in 2020 and 2021.</p>
<p><b>Gary H. Gibbons, M.D. and Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable, M.D.</b> National Institutes of Health Bethesda, MD</p>	<p>Developed and implemented federal programs to increase testing as well as participation in COVID-19 treatment and vaccine trials in underserved communities across the country.</p>
<p><b>Peter Marks, M.D., Ph.D.</b> Food and Drug Administration Silver Spring, MD</p>	<p>Laid the groundwork for strict scientific regulatory standards used for the rapid development, testing and approval of lifesaving COVID-19 vaccines amid a deadly, once-in-a-century pandemic.</p>



## Emerging Leaders Category

This medal recognizes young federal employees, under the age of 35, who have made an important contribution early in their professional career.

<p><b>William Hart-Cooper, Ph.D.</b> Department of Agriculture Albany, CA</p>	<p>Created novel formulations for disinfectants and packaging that break down into harmless substances after use, protecting human health and reducing environmental pollution.</p>
<p><b>Callie I. Higgins, Ph.D.</b> National Institute of Standards and Technology Boulder, CO</p>	<p>Invented a groundbreaking technology to detect and remedy microscopic flaws that threaten the safety and reliability of 3D-printed products, potentially revolutionizing the medical, plastics, coatings, optics and additive manufacturing fields.</p>
<p><b>Edward Sisco, Ph.D.</b> National Institute of Standards and Technology Gaithersburg, MD</p>	<p>Devised a new method for crime laboratories to identify opioids and other drugs more quickly and safely, providing critical information to law enforcement while protecting lab employees from dangerous substances.</p>
<p><b>Lori Vislocky</b> Department of Homeland Security Washington, D.C.</p>	<p>Developed and implemented a new system that enables authorities to quickly identify foreigners who pose a threat to national security or public safety before they travel to the United States.</p>



## Management Excellence Category

This medal recognizes a federal employee or team for a significant accomplishment that exemplifies efficient, effective and results-oriented government.

<p><b>Michelle Daniels, Charles D. Eldridge, Ryan E. Jones and the Foster Youth to Independence team</b> Department of Housing and Urban Development Washington, D.C. (Daniels, Jones) and Fort Worth, TX (Eldridge)</p>	<p>Created an innovative program offering housing assistance and social services to young people aging out of foster care to prevent them from becoming homeless and to provide an opportunity for self-sufficiency.</p>
<p><b>Mary Frances Matthews</b> Department of Veterans Affairs Washington, D.C.</p>	<p>Reduced the lengthy backlog of disability appeals for veterans by 87% in two years, providing long-awaited decisions on benefits to thousands of individuals.</p>
<p><b>Mary D. Gibert</b> General Services Administration Washington, D.C.</p>	<p>Successfully coordinated the federal assistance effort for the 2020-21 presidential transition in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and a disputed election.</p>
<p><b>Stephen G. Jurczyk</b> National Aeronautics and Space Administration Washington, D.C.</p>	<p>Oversaw the landing of a rover on Mars, two successful U.S. astronaut flights to the International Space Station and the planning to put the first woman and first person of color on the moon while leading NASA through the pandemic.</p>
<p><b>Gary Washington</b> Department of Agriculture Washington, D.C.</p>	<p>Led a technology transformation at the Department of Agriculture, dramatically increasing efficiency, productivity and security, and improving service to the public.</p>





## Safety, Security and International Affairs Category

This medal recognizes a federal employee or team for a significant accomplishment in fields such as counterterrorism, civil rights, defense and military affairs, diplomacy, foreign assistance, trade, consumer protection, cybersecurity and emergency preparedness and response.

<b>Ana B. Hinojosa, Eric Choy and team</b> Customs and Border Protection Washington, D.C.	Directed enforcement actions against companies seeking to import goods produced by forced labor in China and other countries, as part of a broader human rights effort to curb modern-day slavery.
<b>Kenneth Graham</b> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Miami, FL	Coordinated the national response to the most active hurricane season on record during the coronavirus pandemic, leading to a 100% evacuation rate in the hardest-hit area during Hurricane Laura, the strongest U.S. landfall in 2020 season.
<b>Adam Jacoff and the Emergency Response Robotics team</b> National Institute of Standards and Technology Gaithersburg, MD	Developed sophisticated testing standards to ensure ground, underwater and aerial robots have the capability to help emergency responders and the military handle disasters and other dangerous situations.
<b>Chong Le</b> Department of the Air Force El Segundo, CA	Oversaw the development of a \$1 billion Air Force satellite system that will enable prediction of major weather events and natural disasters, providing military leaders and civilian authorities with information needed to make crucial, life-saving decisions.
<b>Zack Schwartz and the Census Bureau Trust &amp; Safety team</b> Census Bureau Suitland, MD	Led the first-of-its-kind government team that worked with technology companies to combat misinformation and disinformation that threatened the integrity of the 2020 census.



## Science and Environment Category

This medal recognizes a federal employee or team for a significant accomplishment in fields such as medicine, economics, energy, information technology, space, meteorology and resource conservation.

<p><b>Jay Barlow, Ph.D.</b> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration La Jolla, CA</p>	<p>Played an influential national role in monitoring and managing marine mammals by creating new survey methods and technology to protect and save the lives of whales, dolphins and other species.</p>
<p><b>David L. Boucher, Ph.D., John Lee, Ph.D., Daniel Wolfe, Ph.D. and the Ebola Medical Countermeasures Task Force</b> Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority Washington, D.C.</p>	<p>Oversaw the research and development of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostic tests that have been used to halt the spread of the deadly Ebola virus in Africa and avert the possibility of a pandemic.</p>
<p><b>Reem M. Ghandour, DrPH</b> Health Resources and Services Administration Rockville, MD</p>	<p>Transformed and revitalized a national survey on children’s physical, emotional and developmental health, providing timely and insightful data to state and federal policymakers.</p>
<p><b>Sherry Hunt, Ph.D.</b> Department of Agriculture Stillwater, OK</p>	<p>Pioneered critically needed design techniques to rehabilitate and strengthen thousands of aging dams across the United States, limiting potential failures that could lead to the loss of life and property.</p>
<p><b>Brigitte C. Widemann, M.D. and team</b> National Institutes of Health Bethesda, MD</p>	<p>Developed a breakthrough medical treatment for children with inoperable tumors that cause disabling pain, disfigurement, blindness and motor dysfunction.</p>

