



PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

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Partnership for Public Service announces 2021 Service to America Medal winners and star-studded program to celebrate outstanding federal workers

Drs. Kizzmekia Corbett and Barney Graham will be awarded Federal Employees of the Year medals for their groundbreaking research that led to highly effective COVID-19 vaccines.

WASHINGTON – The nonprofit, nonpartisan [Partnership for Public Service](#) will host its annual [Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medals](#)[®] (Sammies) awards ceremony on Thursday, Oct. 28 at 6 p.m. EDT, at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts to honor outstanding federal workers whose achievements have directly benefited the health, safety and prosperity of our country.

Considered the “Oscars” of government service, the Sammies have earned a reputation as the premier awards program recognizing innovation and leadership in the federal government. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the creation of the Sammies program and the founding of the Partnership for Public Service.

The 2021 **Federal Employees of the Year** award will be presented to [Drs. Kizzmekia Corbett and Barney Graham](#) of the Vaccine Research Center at the National Institutes of Health (Bethesda, Md.). Corbett and Graham conducted groundbreaking research that led to the development of highly effective vaccines for COVID-19 in record time. These vaccines are protecting hundreds of millions of people from contracting the deadly coronavirus that swept across the globe in 2020 and 2021.

The accomplishments of the 2021 Sammies winners span many critical areas of our government’s work that include addressing racial disparities in the COVID-19 response, cracking down on the importation of goods made overseas by forced labor and establishing a process that has accelerated America’s digital revolution and brought billions of dollars to the U.S. Treasury. This year’s honorees also have secured better resources for young adults aging out of foster care, created techniques for preventing and remedying flaws in 3-D printed materials, and improved data collection and reporting on the physical, emotional and developmental health of children to inform policymaking.

“This year’s winners brilliantly showcase how exceptional public servants are leading the efforts to solve many of our nation’s greatest challenges,” **said Max Stier, president and CEO of the Partnership for Public Service.** “It is no understatement to say that the 2021 Service to America Medal honorees have changed the world with their accomplishments, and the depth and breadth of their impact is immeasurable. We thank and celebrate them and all dedicated public servants.”

In addition to giving awards to the seven medalists, the Partnership will present the annual **Spirit of Service Award** to Laurene Powell Jobs, president of Emerson Collective, in recognition of her leadership working with entrepreneurs, community leaders and a diverse set of organizations to unleash the full force of our most powerful resource: human potential. Emerson Collective deploys a wide range of tools —

from impact investing to philanthropy to advocacy — in pursuit of a more equal and just America, with a focus on creating systemic change in education, immigration, climate, and cancer research and treatment.

Powell Jobs will be interviewed about her commitment to service, live at the Sammies gala, by Ruth Porat, senior vice president and chief financial officer of Alphabet and Google, and a member of the Partnership's board of directors.

NBC News White House Correspondent Geoff Bennett will be the gala's emcee. Special gala presenters include White House Chief of Staff Ron Klain, White House COVID-19 Response Director Jeff Zients, Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services Andrea Palm, Deputy Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Adrienne Todman, Deputy Secretary of Department of Homeland Security John Tien, National Institute of Standards and Technology Director Dr. James Olthoff, National Institutes of Health Director Dr. Francis Collins and National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Dr. Anthony Fauci. Fauci was honored by the Partnership in 2020 as Federal Employee of the Year.

In addition to the in-person awards ceremony, a one-hour, star-studded program honoring the 2021 honorees will air nationwide on Nov. 1 at 8 p.m. EDT on [Bloomberg Television](#) and [Axios.com](#), and on the Partnership's [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#) pages. PBS World will air an encore presentation at 9 p.m. EDT on Nov. 2.

The 2021 Sammies virtual program will be hosted by actor and comedian **Aparna Nancherla** and will feature remarks and presentations by a number of celebrities, including:

- **Rose Byrne**, actor.
- **Adam Conover**, creator and host, "Adam Ruins Everything."
- **Melissa Fumero**, actor.
- **Peyton Elizabeth Lee**, actor.
- **Sierra Teller Ornelas**, screenwriter and filmmaker.
- **Oscar Nuñez**, actor and comedian.
- **Audra McDonald**, actor and singer.
- **Jana Schmieding**, comedian, actor and podcaster.
- **Reggie Watts**, comedian, actor and musician.

Additionally, **President Joe Biden** and more than a dozen actors, celebrities, journalists and professional athletes will participate in the Sammies virtual program, including Samantha Bee, Mark Cuban, Meghan Duggan, Kal Penn, Andrew Rannells and Amy Schumer.

The 2021 Sammies winners are a diverse group selected from more than 350 nominations. Of the 29 finalists announced in May 2021, the seven medalists were chosen by a prestigious [selection committee](#) that included leaders from government, business, charitable organizations, academia, entertainment and media.

The 2021 Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medals recipients:

Drs. Kizzmekia Corbett and Barney Graham of the National Institutes of Health (Bethesda, Md.) are the recipients of the **Federal Employees of the Year Medal**, the top honor of the Sammies program. Corbett and Graham drew on years of foundational research to design the basic structure for the life-saving COVID-19 vaccines in record time. Graham, who recently retired as deputy director of the NIH Vaccine Research Center, and Corbett, who led the coronavirus research team in Graham's Viral Pathogenesis Laboratory before moving on to the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health earlier this

year, made versions of a spike protein based on prior work from other coronaviruses. Just days after Graham and Corbett supplied the critical information, collaborators at the biotech company Moderna were able to manufacture the first doses of the coronavirus vaccine. The first human trials began just 65 days later.

Drs. Gary H. Gibbons and Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable of the National Institutes of Health (Bethesda, Md.) are the recipients of the **COVID-19 Response Medal**, which was created this year to recognize outstanding federal workers who played important roles in the government's response to the pandemic. Gibbons and Pérez-Stable established two outreach programs that funded new partnerships between NIH and local organizations to ensure better access for underserved populations to COVID-19 testing and COVID-19 vaccine trials. Throughout 2020, Gibbons and Pérez-Stable met with drugmakers, including Moderna, to discuss strategies for improving diversity in clinical vaccine trials. On their recommendation, Moderna eventually paused its normal recruiting procedures and began to recruit only participants from underrepresented communities, successfully improving diversity in the trials. According to Gibbons and Pérez-Stable, Black and Latino participants composed roughly 20% of Moderna's trials in mid-August. Two months later, underrepresented groups made up 37%—with Latino, Black and Asian Americans constituting 20%, 10% and 4% of the participants, respectively.

Evan Kwerel from the Federal Communications Commission (Washington, D.C.) is the recipient of the **Paul A. Volcker Career Achievement Medal**. During more than three decades as an FCC economist, Kwerel has been a key driver of America's wireless revolution, establishing the first-ever competitive auctions to allocate public airwaves for the transmission of sound, data and video across the country. The market-based FCC auctions involved radio frequencies that carry voices between cell phones, television shows from broadcasters, and online information from one computer to the next. Since the early 1990s, a total of 107 FCC spectrum auctions have generated more than \$200 billion in revenue for the government.

The Paul A. Volcker Career Achievement Medal is named after the extraordinary public servant who made a profound difference for our country and was the leading voice on the value of government service. In 2019, the Partnership renamed the Sammies career achievement medal in his honor. [The naming of the Paul A. Volcker Career Achievement Medal](#) was made possible through the generous support of Ray and Barbara Dalio.

Callie Higgins of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (Boulder, Co.) is the recipient of the **Emerging Leaders Medal**. At 31, Higgins and her colleagues 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.

Michelle Daniels, Charles Eldridge Ryan Jones and the Office of Public and Indian Housing Foster Youth to Independence team of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (Washington, D.C., and Ft. Worth, Tex.) are the recipients of the **Management Excellence Medal**. Daniels, Eldridge, Jones and their HUD team advocated for, developed, implemented and now run an innovative program that provides 18- to 24-year-olds aging out of foster care with rental assistance and other support services so they can work toward their educational and employment goals and reach economic self-sufficiency. The Foster Youth to Independence Initiative fills a longstanding gap in the social safety net.

Reem Ghandour of the Health Resources and Services Administration (Rockville, Md.) is the recipient of the **Science and Environment Award**. Ghandour is recognized for transforming and revitalizing a national survey on children's physical, emotional and developmental health that provides timely and insightful data to state and federal policymakers. Ghandour took over the National Survey of Children's Health in 2013 and is now breaking new ground by using the survey to examine several new areas—

behavior, social-emotional interactions and gross motor development—to assess whether children around the country are generally on track for kindergarten.

Ana Hinojosa and Eric Choy of Customs and Border Protection (Washington, D.C.) are the recipients of the **Safety, Security and International Affairs Medal**. From the time a new law was signed in 2016 through January 2021, a unit led by Hinojosa and Choy issued approximately 30 orders that blocked the shipment into the U.S. of products made by forced labor, such as cotton garments, toys, potassium, hair products, peeled garlic and the plant extract stevia from China. During the previous 80 years, only 33 of such orders had been issued by the federal government, meaning that Hinojosa and Choy dramatically stepped up enforcement and curtailed goods made by forced labor from crossing our borders.

Hinojosa and Choy are also the recipients of the seventh annual **Service to America Medals People's Choice** award, which was [presented by CNN's Kate Bolduan in August](#). More than 113,000 votes were cast during this year's People's Choice selection process—a record number for the award. Hinojosa and Choy received the most votes out of all 29 Sammies finalists in an online selection process that was open to the public.

The 2021 Service to America Medals are made possible by the generous support of our sponsors. The premier sponsor for the 2021 Sammies is Mrs. Ronnie F. Heyman and family. National sponsors are Bloomberg Philanthropies, Microsoft Federal, Jennifer and David Millstone, Indra and Raj Nooyi, Standard Industries and Patricia A. and George W. Wellde Jr. Capital sponsors are Tom and Andi Bernstein, Charina Endowment Fund, ConantLeadership, Goldman Sachs Gives, Lockheed Martin and Sharon Marcil and Tom Monahan.

The 2021 Sammies will reach more viewers than ever thanks to the generous support of media partners Axios, Bloomberg, Facebook, LinkedIn, PBS World, Twitter and YouTube.

Renamed the Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medals in 2010 to commemorate the organization's founder, the program has honored more than 660 outstanding federal employees since its inception in 2002. For profiles and videos of current and past honorees, and to nominate a federal employee for a 2022 Service to America Medal, visit servicetoamericamedals.org.

During the past 20 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 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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