

# FWA Female Veterans Initiative

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In an engaging panel discussion at the JPMorgan Chase headquarters, the FWA announced its new initiative, the Financial Women’s Association for Women Veterans: Serving Women Who Served. With women comprising 8% of all U.S. veterans, easing their transition from the military to the private sector—in particular, financial services—was the focus of the evening. The challenges that veterans face, such as positioning their military abilities for private sector professions, took center stage at this session with more than 125 Members and Guests.



The panel (from left) Moderator Helio Fred Garcia Lieutenant Colonel Elizabeth Ortiz, Investor Client Management’s Theresa Piasta, a former captain in the U.S. Army, and Maureen Casey, director of Military and Veterans Affairs at JPMorgan Chase.

**FWA President Kimberly Weinrick** opened the program by unveiling the newly formed FWA’s Women Veterans Initiative, for which the groundwork was laid in 2013 based on research and proactive connections. Kimberly gave the packed house background and history on the FWA and underscored, “The FWA strives to accelerate the leadership of women in the financial community across all industries by advancing careers, fostering alliances and preparing the current and next generation of professionals.”

Kimberly further explained that the FWA’s experience, programs, breath of membership and corporate affiliations can come together to assist women veterans in their transition to the private sector, especially in the financial sector. “The FWA for Female Veterans is a natural fit,” she emphasized, highlighting the potential professional development and resume courses the FWA is developing. She then introduced the **Committee co-Chairs: Raleigh Mayer and Andy Esposito**. The FWA also has a dedicated email for veteran ideas, comments and questions: [Veterans@fwa.org](mailto:Veterans@fwa.org).

**The Panelists:** ([Click for full profiles](#))



FWA Women Who Serve Committee Member Marlene “Molly” Levi with co-Chairs: Andrea “Andy Esposito” and Raleigh Mayer

**Elizabeth Ortiz**, a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Air Force; deployments include: Baghdad, Iraq; Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan; Balad, Iraq; and Djibouti, Africa.

**Theresa Piasta**, an Associate in Investor Client Management at J.P. Morgan in the Corporate & Investment Bank. Theresa was a Captain in the U.S. Army. She served in Fort Hood, TX, and the active Reserves in Fort Totten, N.Y.

**Helio Fred Garcia** (*Moderator*)

Author, moderator and executive coach, Fred's most recent book, "The Power of

Communication: Skills to Build Trust, Inspire Loyalty, and Lead Effectively," has been named to the United States Marine Corps Commandant's Professional Reading List.

**Maureen Casey**, Head of Military and Veterans Affairs, JPMorgan Chase. Maureen has more than 25 years of government and management consulting experience including Deputy Commissioner for Policy and Planning in the New York City Police Department."



Panelists (l-r): Maureen Casey, Theresa Piasta, Helio Fred Garcias (Moderator), FWA President Kimberly Weinrick and Elizabeth Ortiz

Responding to initial questions on the panel, Elizabeth Ortiz explained she would soon be making the transition from a 20-year career in the military to civilian life. "In my family, we call the Air Force the family business," she said with a laugh. But on a more serious note, she's not looking forward to searching for civilian health care, developing her resume, and looking for a job when she transitions.

As a woman, Ortiz is part of the fastest-growing segment within the veteran community. "We're here not only to recognize the tremendous sacrifice women veterans make on our behalf, but also to raise awareness about the unique challenges they face when transitioning out of the military," said Maureen Casey. The firm offers a comprehensive **Military & Veterans Affairs** program focused on employment, education and housing.

Casey explained how the firm formed a coalition with 10 other companies in 2011 and launched the 100,000 Jobs Mission.

"In less than three years, the coalition has grown to more than 140 companies and hired about 117,500 veterans," she said. "Given the momentum, we've doubled our goal to 200,000 hires by 2020." Casey added that veteran service organizations and private sector companies are making strides to address challenges



Members and Guests were not at a loss for questions and ideas, as representatives from several Presidents' Circle firms and organizations that serve veterans shared their own goals, learnings and objectives with attendees.

women veterans face. “But we do want to create a sense of urgency that action is necessary,” she said.

Moderating the panel, Fred Garcia opened the floor by asking those in the audience to share what work their firms are undertaking to serve Veterans. Members and Guests, representatives from several Presidents’ Circle firms and organizations that serve veterans shared their own goals, common learnings and their firm’s objectives with attendees.

### **Different Types of Change**

Being deployed five times in the past 10 years has made Ortiz adaptable—but moving the private sector will be different. “For me, being deployed is the norm,” she said. “Transitioning to a normal life is going to be the challenge.” She admitted she hadn’t put together a resume until a month or so ago; she didn’t need one for the past 19 years. Commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Air Force in November 1994, she trained to be a communications officer and later cross-trained into the public affairs career field in October 2000.



### **Networking Can Help**

For Theresa Piasta, networking with fellow veterans proved to be the key to finding a private sector job when she left the U.S. Army. From 2006-2010, Piasta was a captain in the U.S. Army and served in the 41st Fires Brigade at Fort Hood, Texas. She was deployed to Iraq, where she was awarded a Bronze Star Medal, and later served as an active Reservist in Fort Trotten, N.Y., until mid-2012.

A graduate of Wellesley College with a Bachelor’s degree in economics, she was told by most people that she should go back to school when she left the Army. Anxious to find a job, she took a different route and decided to network with other veterans.

“I joined LinkedIn,” she said. After creating her profile, she found other veterans on the social networking website were anxious to help her—37 people in all—and she found her first private sector job that way. Since then, she’s joined J.P. Morgan and regularly networks with other military veterans whenever she can. “It’s important for us to pay it forward and help each other out,” Piasta said.

Ortiz further commented, “The beauty is that you will always find someone who’s willing to help—it’s what we do.”

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