

Delaware State Police Announce the Retirement of Colonel Melissa A. Zebley

After more than 32 years of dedicated and faithful service, Colonel Melissa A. Zebley will officially retire on November 1, 2024. Throughout her distinguished career, her commitment to the citizens and visitors of Delaware, coupled with her exceptional leadership, has significantly shaped and enriched the agency.

Her calling to public service began as a participant in the State Police Explorer Program, an experience that inspired her lifelong devotion to law enforcement. Col. Zebley joined the DSP on July 16, 1992, completing the 61st Delaware State Police Academy Recruit Class. Following graduation, she began her career as a trooper at Troop 6.

Col. Zebley's early years showcased her determination and versatility. In September 1997, she served as a drill instructor officer at the DSP Training Academy, where she shaped the future of law enforcement by mentoring recruits from numerous law enforcement agencies. This role set the stage for her to build the foundation of safety and integrity that has defined her career. Promoted to Sergeant in 2002, she served as a shift commander at Troop 1 and became a member of the Critical Incident Stress Management Team, supporting the wellbeing of her colleagues.

Her professional journey was characterized by her passion for personal and organizational growth. She earned a Master of Science from Wilmington University in 2003, and in 2005, she took on the responsibility of Public Information Officer, eventually becoming the unit's Director. After being promoted to Lieutenant in December 2006, she was assigned to

Headquarters as staff support. During that time, she graduated from the prestigious 235th Session of the FBI National Academy, raising the bar for professional standards.

Col. Zebley continued to excel through multiple leadership roles, demonstrating her remarkable ability to adapt and lead in different areas of the agency. In August 2009, she was promoted to Captain and assigned to Troop 1. While serving as Troop 1's Commander, she was selected as Officer in Charge of the DSP Honor Guard. Her promotion to Major in 2010 brought new challenges, where she oversaw the DSP budget, training academy, and human resources.

In 2012, she was appointed New Castle County Operations Major, where she led critical sections of the DSP, such as the statewide Traffic Section, Criminal Investigations, and Patrol, ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of county operations. By August 2019, she had ascended to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, overseeing Internal Affairs, Information Technology, and the Office of Strategic Development. In July 2020, she made history as the agency's 26th Superintendent—the first woman to hold the position in DSP's 101-year history.

Col. Zebley's tenure as Superintendent has been marked by innovation and progress. She co-led the Delaware State Police Leadership Development Program, one of the state's premier leadership initiatives, which has benefited over 600 participants to date. Under her leadership, the DSP's first Highway Safety Unit was established, a major step in enhancing safety on Delaware's roads through strategic enforcement and public education.

Her dedication to public safety and advocacy for traffic safety were recognized when she received the AAMVA Lifetime Achievement in Roadway Safety in Law Enforcement Award. Additionally, she was inducted into the 2024 Delaware Women's Hall of Fame for her broader contributions to Delaware's communities.

Prioritizing the well-being of the DSP family, she was instrumental in the creation of the agency's first-ever Wellness Unit, which includes a confidential peer support team. She also introduced a wellness app to support the mental health and overall well-being of DSP employees, their families, and retirees. Her deep understanding of the challenges faced by law enforcement officers drove these groundbreaking initiatives.

During her tenure as Superintendent in the Centennial year, Col. Zebley honored the legacy of those who served throughout the agency's rich history. She paid tribute to the generations of public servants who built and expanded the DSP's legacy, ensuring it continues to thrive and inspire those who follow.

Under her leadership, the DSP brand underwent a significant transformation, including modernizing the agency's public image, as showcased during the 100th anniversary celebration. DSP's social media platforms were also expanded to be more engaging under Col. Zebley's leadership, thereby strengthening the connection with the communities served by the Delaware State Police.

Governor John Carney highlighted her impact, stating, *"Throughout her more than 32-year career with the Delaware State Police, Col. Zebley has made a profound impact on our state. She's a trailblazer who worked to not only protect our residents, but also her fellow officers—always striving to make the Delaware State Police stronger while supporting officer well-being. I want to thank her for taking on the challenge four years ago of leading our largest police agency and serving this state with distinction. I wish her all the best in retirement."*

Secretary of Safety and Homeland Security Nathaniel McQueen Jr. echoed these sentiments, adding, *"Colonel Zebley has excelled at every rank and exemplifies what it means to be a Delaware State Trooper. Her countless impactful contributions*

and accomplishments are sure to leave an indelible mark on the enduring history of the Delaware State Police. She leaves a legacy illustrated by her commitment to leadership, her strength of character, and her empathy and compassion for others. It has been a privilege to serve with Colonel Zebley throughout her career, and I wish her and her family all the best as she enters the next chapter of her life."

Additionally, she led the celebration of Camp Barnes' 75th anniversary, recognizing its long-standing role in shaping young lives and fostering leadership, friendship, and confidence for generations of Delaware's youth.

Colonel Melissa Zebley's retirement is not only the conclusion of a career defined by extraordinary achievement but also the closing of a chapter for an agency profoundly impacted by her leadership. The Delaware State Police will greatly miss her wisdom, compassion, and unwavering dedication, and we wish her the best in her well-deserved retirement.