



FlyGirl: The Critical Role of Teams and Communications | LTIS Episode 5 | Jan. 16, 2022

Ed: Hello and welcome to “Legislatures: The Inside Storey,” a podcast from the National Conference of State Legislatures. Your host is Tim Storey, the executive director of NCSL. Tim talks with legislators, journalists, academics, political analysts, and others about the ideas and policies shaping state legislatures today.

Tim’s guest for this podcast is Vernice “FlyGirl” Armour. Armour was the first Black female combat pilot in the U.S. Marine Corps. She served two tours in Iraq flying missions in the AH-1W Super Cobra attack helicopter.

After she left the Marine Corps in 2007, she began a career as an author and professional speaker. She was a keynote speaker at NCSL’s Legislative Summit in Tampa, Florida, in November.

Armour discusses how her military experience shaped her attitudes about teamwork and leadership and the critical importance of communications and listening. She also educates Tim on the finer points of military aircraft.

Here’s their discussion.

Tim: Good day Vernice Armour. This is Tim Storey. Welcome back to our podcast if you’re a repeat listener and, man, I’m excited about today. We’ve got a fantastic guest, which you’re going to find out in just a matter of seconds, someone who has an incredible, unique story to tell and has developed some amazing and keen insights into leadership writ large, and of

course, we'll bring it back to the legislature world that I think most of you live in, that ecosystem that you inhabit.

So, we hear in the intro, you heard a short capsule of our guest today, Vernice Armour, coming to us from Atlanta, Ga. Vernice, thank you so much for carving out some time to be with us for the next half hour or so.

Time Marker (TM): 02:27

Tim: Give us the version of how you introduce yourself.

Vernice: How do I introduce myself? Well, first, I always say FlyGirl because that's the brand. Branding is everything. And then when people see me somewhere, they don't really remember Vernice Armour, they just remember oh, FlyGirl. So, that's funny.

The funniest part, Tim, is that was actually not my call sign when I was in the Marine Corps.

Tim: Now you have to tell us your call sign.

Vernice: Exactly, I teed it up, so now I've got to tell you what the call sign was. Call signs are a big deal, right, in the military, and in the Marine Corps, we actually having naming ceremonies, call sign ceremonies. And the more you dislike a call sign, the more it sticks and you have no say over what your call sign is.

So, there were quite a few options, let's say of what my call sign would be. It turns out my CO, commanding officer, picked out my call sign. He already told everybody he picked it out and it was going to be revealed on call sign day. And he wrote this poem when we were in the instrument pattern, doing instrument landings. He was in the front because in the back is where you do all your stuff. I'm getting way into the weeds.

We head out, he has like this six-stanza poem, but the last line says: "With all your have in that trunk, we will simply call you junk." And I said what? I said, sir, what were doing looking at my trunk anyway? (laugh) And then, that is how we are starting off this podcast today.

TM: 03:42

Tim: So, I like FlyGirl. I think that's a good call sign. For this podcast, your call sign in FlyGirl. I am not your CO, but I think we're going to roll with that. I love that story because one, obviously you spent a large part of your career in the U.S. Marine Corps as a tactical helicopter pilot on active duty in Iraq. You've got some unbelievable tales from that time.

You have evolved your career into a different place now where you're sharing your experience and your wisdom with people around the country and probably around the world I'm guessing. So, let's go back to the beginning. Where are you from originally? Where did you grow up? We have listeners from all 50 states, legislators. So, are you my constituent?

Vernice: I've lived in quite a few states and before we move forward, let me close the loop on the call sign story because people are probably thinking OK, well, how did she get FlyGirl though? And I will tie this into why we're here today.

I was speaking at an event. Mae Jemison, first woman of color astronaut was holding an event, a STEM event for young girls. Nichelle Nichols, Lieutenant Uhura from "Star Trek," was there. She is so amazing. And it was at the National Guard part of Midway Airport in Chicago. So, of course, I always go around, and I try to talk to our service members whenever I go on a base or anything.

So, I ended up going to the flight equipment room, because we're at a hangar with helicopters and all that kind of stuff. That's how I ended up being there. And I go into the flight equipment room and I'm talking to the sergeant in there, hey, how you doing, what's going on, and he was working on some stuff in there, these patches that have FlyGirl on it. And I said: Whoa, this is so cool! Can I have one of these? He was, "Absolutely ma'am, take it, it's yours." I ripped off my name badge and put that one on immediately. I was like FlyGirl – oh that's just cool.

And as I wore that flight suit around to more and more events, people just started calling me FlyGirl because it was on the patch. And after a while I was like oh, FlyGirl, this is cool, so I adopted it, right. Then I actually went through a branding process and my very first book was coming out. And I said, well, wait a minute – FlyGirl – why is that not in my official branding? So, I added it and from then on, it's been Vernice "FlyGirl" Armour.

TM: 06:08

Tim: That's actually a great story and it reveals a lot about military culture. There are so many elements of people who have never served. It can be quite mysterious in many ways. So, love that story.

Vernice: This is true, and the tying in was just: How are we getting to know our people? I was walking around; I was talking to that guy. When I was walking around in my flight suit, people see the name and it's like a connector, it feels good, it's good energy. And when I look at our legislators, our staff, what we represent and what we do, our community, our people, our nation, it's a huge deal how we're connecting in every moment, and it always has a huge impact.

Think about it if I had never talked to that guy that day. I wouldn't be FlyGirl right now.

TM: 07:02

Tim: So, you just described the world of legislatures, especially for new legislators. You get elected, you've probably been recruited in some way or form or fashion; somebody asked you to run for public office. You have some idea what it's all about. You talk to others who have done it and they tell you mostly the good things, and there are a lot of good things to serving the people in your community.

And then you show up on orientation day and it's your first day. And these capitols have this sort of closed world where there are other legislators, there's a lot of staff, and there are a lot of lobbyists and people representing every interest under the sun.

I've done new legislator training and I often tell them to be very cognizant of your reputation/brand because it will take hold fast and if you're not aware of it, you will become: oh, that's the person who talks to much in the committee, or that's the person who asks really great questions, or sometimes it's that's the person who drives the enormous Ford 250, F250 out in the lot, and that's a good brand, right, or that's the woman who's got the incredible cowboy boots.

But I think the point is as legislators, you've got to think a little bit about how you're being perceived because that will stick with you all the way through, whether you serve two years or 20 years in the legislature. So, we'll talk about branding. Where are you from FlyGirl?

Vernice: Born in Chicago, south side, Lake Meadows, and all my family on my dad's side for the most part still live up there. My grandmother just passed away at the age of 97 and she lived at that 7600 block of South King Drive for many, many, many years.

We had a family grocery store up there, Armour's Grocery. If you're listening and you're from Chicago, you might remember it over in that area. Parents got divorced when I was three. My mom met an amazing guy. He was a Marine. And we moved out to California. They got married. Then we moved to Memphis, Tennessee in '81; if you guys remember the housing crash and all that stuff back then. Some tough stuff happened back in '81, right?

So, we moved back east to live with granny, my mom's mom. I grew up in the Memphis area high school. Then I went to Middleton State University right outside of Nashville to go to college.

Tim: Home of the Blue Raiders.

Vernice: Home of the Blue Raiders – that's right. What do you know about that Tim?

Tim: That's for another podcast.

Vernice: That's hilarious. And I'll stop my transitions there because then I get into... well, I was a cop in Nashville as well while going through school. Took some time off, became a police officer, finished up school parttime, and then entered... Well, actually, I moved out to Phoenix, and I was a cop out there in Tempe, Arizona.

Then after four years of working to get into the Marine Corps, I finally got accepted. That's another whole story. I mean, there are just stories upon stories. Then I moved quite a bit with the military as well. So, you name a city or a state, I've probably been there or lived there.

TM: 10:24

Tim: You have a connection. I love that. That's actually pretty cool. That's a pretty different but good education, because you're always learning when you go to these places.

So, you go on, you have a fascinating career in the Marine Corps. I assume Blackhawk; what kind of helicopter were you flying?

Vernice: No, that's the Army.

Tim: Oh geez, now I've really ruined everything. We can cut that in post-production.

Vernice: No, leave it in there. We're leaving that in there.

Tim: What kind of helicopter did you fly?

Vernice: Cobras, the AH-1W Super Cobra attack helicopter.

Tim: Honestly, I bely my knowledge of weaponry and helicopters.

Vernice: Now, the Army did used to have Cobras and they transitioned to the Black Hawk and the Apache, and the Marine Corps stayed with the Cobras and have kept them going. So, there was just a split.

Tim: Okay, I'm kind of glad you filled me in on that. I'm curious about that kind of thing, so thank you.

TM: 11:30

Tim: You are in the hot zone. You are in the war zone in Iraq I assume and how long did you serve in combat?

Vernice: I served two tours, eight months the first time, nine months the second time I think, and my last tour ended in February '05.

Tim: And where were Marines based then when you were flying in and out of Iraq or in Iraq?
Jaber

Vernice: So, during the invasion, we were in Kuwait and the jets, the fast movers, were at [Al] Jaber and we were at [Ali] Al Salem, which was an Air Force base; the southern watch was there as well. We built up tents and all that kind of stuff. We called it the snake pit where all the Marines were and that's where the invasion took place. That was our base camp.

Then my second tour when we were in Iraq, we were based at Al Asad, which was a 45-minute helicopter flight west of Bagdad. I did many deployments inside of a deployment at what we called FOBS: forward operating bases. And I was stationed at Al-Qa'im, for a lot of that.

And then actually the very first deployment, I was stationed at An Najaf. That's where the battle in the cemetery happened, if you remember that.

Tim: Yeah, you told this story at the NCSL meeting in Tampa, an amazing story.

TM: 12:58

Tim: What's the time, like years... when was this?

Vernice: So, we were boots on the ground in February 2003. The war actually kicked off at the end of March 2003. And came back in September 2003, actually on my 30th birthday. It was my birthday when we took off and it was still my birthday when I landed at home, so that was pretty cool. In that case, the time zone difference worked for me.

Tim: The longest birthday of your life.

Vernice: Boom, ba da boom. That was good. That was good!

Tim: If I give you one thing FlyGirl, that's it.

Vernice: You gave me that one. I'm going hold on to that, the longest birthday of my life.

And the second deployment was July to February 2004 to 2005. So, there was a nine-month gap. And it was crazy because you remember when Rumsfeld was secretary of Defense, and it was like everybody out and there was this mass pullout. And when we left in September, we all thought that was it, and literally within months of getting home, we were doing workups to go back.

It took me about 30 days to really wrap my mind around... I was like wow... after such a massive pullout and assets, equipment, all that kind of stuff, boom, here we were again.

TM: 14:25

Tim: So, I actually did this little consulting gig in Bagdad in 2005 for just a few weeks with the National Assembly there. I was part of the many people who cycled through there, mostly in the Green Zone. But boy, I used to love those helicopters zipping around. I know it wasn't exactly fun for you; those were probably in the Green Zone mostly Marines. The Chinooks would come in at night with all the stuff and I am just massively envious of getting to fly around on helicopters. It's just got to be one of the coolest things in the world.

Vernice: Flying helicopters, as you said, it might not have been that fun for me. It was a blast! It was amazing! I mean, I've got a multi-million-dollar education on flying and attack helicopters that shoot cool stuff like missiles and rockets and a 20-mm Gatling gun. Are you kidding me? And the smell of gunpowder in the cockpit.

I mean, that was one of the most amazing time periods of my life, being able to jump into that cockpit, strap on that aircraft and go fly. It was a rollercoaster without wheels.

Tim: I was thinking more about especially around Bagdad at that time, there was a lot of risk involved. That was a high-risk operation every time you took off the ground.

Vernice: This is very true. There was a lot of risk involved, yes.

TM: 15:51

Tim: Let's transition to this whole what you've learned and what you're now sharing with the world about this incredible... and I assume FlyGirl is not all about flying helicopters. You have a very intricate and complex life outside of just that. That's one part of you. But like everybody, we have many things that feed in and make us who we are.

So, we got to hear you speak at the NCSL Legislative Summit in Tampa a couple months ago about the lessons you've learned and what you like to share with people in all walks of life, whether they're doing IT in a large company or running a small Armour Grocery in South Chicago, whatever. You like to come in and say hey, there are lessons for life, there are lessons for leadership that we can all draw and bring into our world.

What did you tell those legislators about? Here's the key: you want to be successful at whatever you do – passing laws, writing the laws; you're the bill drafter that writes the laws. You're the auditor that audits the success of that. What do you share? What are your core tenants when it comes to that?

Vernice: I'll back up a little bit before I go into the "spiel" of what do I talk about. When I first became a Marine, I remember my cousin who was an author already; he wanted me to write a book. And I was like cous, I haven't done anything yet. Let me do something and yeah, let's do it.

Then 9/11 happened. Two tours in, I remember it was 2:00 o'clock in the morning and I was talking on a satellite phone, and I was talking to my cousin, and I remember looking up at the stars and if you've ever been in an area where there is no light pollution, and you can look up and you just see millions and millions and millions of stars. It's almost like a white sky with black specks, right, instead of dark sky with white specks. It's pretty amazing.

And I just remember talking to him and saying alright, I've done some things, I'm ready. Honestly, Tim, what I realized because in-between the tours and coming home I spoke at a couple of schools and did some outreach and a couple of companies wanted me to speak for them, like Black History Month or something like that. People would ask me how did I do it, how did I create the breakthrough, and at that point, I was 29/30 years old. So, I'd already been the first woman of color to ride motors for the National Police Department; I was the first Black woman on the Tempe police department, I was the Marine Corps' first Black female pilot, I was the first Black female combat pilot in all the armed services.

I'm 29/30 years old and they're like oh my god, how did you do... And what I realized is everyone, everyone wanted to create a breakthrough. A lot of folks just didn't know how. And that's what I wanted my book to be about, not Black chick overcomes all, right, even though I am a Black, gay woman who has gone through a lot of things just like anybody else I would run into. We all have challenges. We all have obstacles that we've overcome.

And I think that would be the overriding question. People would say well, did you have any challenges? And you heard me say it in the talk: acknowledge the obstacles; don't give them

power. Acknowledge the obstacles and honestly, now I look at obstacles as the opportunity. An obstacle is just an opportunity that hasn't been uncovered yet. Period, end of story.

So, it's like Vitamin O for breakfast. Let's go! Let's go! Right? But that's the art of the reframe. So, what are some of the things that I spoke about when I was sharing time with NCSL? So definitely one, acknowledge the obstacles, don't give them power.

My great-grandmother would always say: something good is going to come out of this. Right? No matter what it was, and it could totally be catastrophic. And what I know more than anything is adversity drives innovation. Period. Period. So, when we as legislators and staff, and I honestly, I don't separate it – I look at us as the team – when we, the team, have a goal that we are going for, we're looking to create the good out of what might not have been so good. And many times, when we're passing bills, something happened, and we now have to create a new law. Right? We have to create legislation for our state to create a better environment for people to learn, to grow, to live. We're talking about our community.

And we say constituents – this is our community. It's another C word, communing, coming together to live an extraordinary life. And how we, as the legislative team, doing that? So, another one is the detour is the path. We've seen where we've gone down roads and this didn't work out, that didn't work out. We try to make agreements.

It doesn't matter if you're Republican, Democrat, Independent, Green Party, Tea Party, whatever – there are all these things. But at the end of the day, I think what we can all agree on is that we want our American citizens, states, Alaska, Hawaii, territories, Guam, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico – we want Americans to have a better life than the generation before.

TM: 21:29

Tim: That's the mission, right, I mean it feels like regardless of your ideology, you do want to solve problems. And when you talked, you just touched on about five different things I want to pursue. One is you talk about this notion of things can seem so impossible, so daunting. People do give up. Some people are like ah, I'm not up to this task.

But you come in and you want to... you know, there's a drug overdose that seems to be coming back around for a second wave almost, a mental health crisis that's attached to the pandemic and you've got all kinds of housing issues and disconnected issues for people in rural American who don't feel through connected through the Internet and broadband and getting those things. So, how do we get broadband out to every nook and cranny of this enormous nation?

So, these problems can seem overwhelming, impossible. But what you're telling folks is don't stop.

Vernice: I mean, we can call them problems, we can call them obstacles, we can call them challenges. Mission Impossible – if you are up for this challenge, right. How many times do we say: Come one, come, are you up to it? You'll feeling up to the challenge? Let's go, let's go. Because it is challenging.

Glennon Doyle, I love her book, “Untamed,” right. In that book she says: we can do hard things. People say: oh, this is so hard, so hard, my little girl, she’s six years old, she says Mommy, it’s hard, and I was like yeah baby, it is hard. And guess what? You can do hard things. Let’s go. Let’s do it. Right?

Dr. King has an amazing quote: You don’t have to see the entire staircase to take the first step.

TM: 23:1425

Tim: I never heard that particular King quote, and it is a great quote. It also is hey, the detour is the path. It’s in the same neighborhood. Right? You and Dr. King, great quotes in the same neighborhood, because I was thinking about the detour being the path. So, okay, we’re going to work on mental health for our communities, our states.

We have no idea. We’ve just got to start working the problem. I don’t want to put words in your mouth, but was that your approach? Did every mission go exactly the way you planned it out? I mean, you had pre-mission briefs, I’m sure.

Vernice: Yes, Tim, it went exactly as we planned. (laugh) We always said no plan survives first contact with the enemy. And usually before first contact, the plan had already changed. By the time we’re going out and getting in the aircraft, the plan has already changed, because the situation has changed, the enemy has changed, the weather has changed, the friendlies have changed, whatever.

And we hear this all the time, especially now – the only constant is change. That’s the only thing you can absolutely say for sure is things will keep changing.

TM: 24:24

Tim: So, how do you prepare for that? What advice to give people, like oh man, I never know what to expect. Is it just: be ready for it, be adaptable? What do you tell people?

Vernice: What I talked about that mission in the desert where the missile didn’t come off...

Tim: Can you do like a...

Vernice: A quick recap?

Tim: Yeah, 120-second version of that? That’s impossible, I know.

Vernice: Basically, we got called out. We were taking out a building that had a bunch of munitions in it and we were shooting into it, blowing it up because those munitions would have been used for IEDs later on down the road on our troops. And we got called into an urgent situation where Marines and soldiers were pinned down, but we were low on fuel, and we only had one missile left because we were already taking out this building. And Marines don’t leave Marines behind, right?

We head up to the north of the cemetery, checking on station. We end up finding where the Marines are. We see the target. We start getting shot at. We circle around, we have one opportunity and oh, by the way, that one missile that was still on the aircraft was there because we didn't ever want to use it because it was known to be unreliable in a lot of situations. But that's all we had. So, that's what we were going to use.

We get into what we call the pop – that's where the aircraft flies up, gets a little bit of elevation to look down on the target as it's flying. People have seen how that looks many times. And I pulled the trigger, and the missile doesn't come off. That's the moment where the Marines are going hand-to-hand. If we don't come through, they're going to be stranded down there. No weapons, no munitions.

Tim: No calvary, no more Cobras coming over the hill.

Vernice: Not in that moment and they're pinned down by the enemy. I didn't see weapons; they didn't have any ammo; they had run out. They didn't even have any green smoke to show us where they were. They had to use a Boy Scout mirror basically to shine a light for us to pick up on them. And this was the crucial component, right – we communicated in the cockpit with the guys that were covering us, reset the switches, boom, missile comes off, we get back, we land, almost out of fuel, completely out of ammo.

It was amazing that we were able to accomplish the mission that day. And when I ask folks: What allowed us to be successful? Many times, I'm looking for people to say the pilot, the mirror or the missile. But folks start yelling out things like communication, teamwork, resilience, guts, persistence. And it's like yes, yes, yes, training.

And what I feel the most essential component was, was the plan. It was our plan. Even though it changed as we got out there, it shifted, the whole mission changed; talk about the plan changing. Hello COVID 2020 – the whole mission changed. But the plan was the framework that took us from where we were to where we wanted to be.

So, that flexibility and adaptability that you talked about just a little bit earlier was absolutely key, and do you think that's the first time we thought what if the missile doesn't come off? No. We had contingency upon contingency upon contingency.

So, even though we didn't prepare for COVID-19, we had prepared in different ways to be able to bring all that information together to be able to create inroads into what ended up becoming a global pandemic. So, even though we weren't prepared for COVID-19, we were prepared to tackle the challenge. Does that make sense?

Tim: Yeah, absolutely.

Vernice: Yeah.

TM: 28:07

Tim: And I was also thinking about the fact that it could have been anybody in the seat that day, right? You're handed the challenge. You don't know what challenge you're going to get handed. The legislators that were elected two/four years ago, they didn't know this was going to be this extreme stress test of every system that we have essentially. But it doesn't matter. You're there. You're in the seat. You're the one who has to lean on your training and lean on your instincts and all that stuff.

Vernice: That's why I say bloom where you plant it. No matter what the situation, no matter what the time, no matter where you are, no matter who is on your team, you frickin' bloom where you are planted.

Tim: Well, it's your time. You have been called. Now is the time to go.

TM: 28:50

Tim: Hey, before we... our time is going to run out. This has been a recurring motif for this podcast; we always run out of time. But let me just say, teams – legislatures are collaborative. You have to have votes to pass a bill out of committee. You're on the floor and you've got to get a whole lot of people onboard to just put a bill together and support it and be out there talking it up.

What's a secret to teams? I mean, the military is really good at this. This is one last thought here. That's my impression that the military is really good at getting people to work together and teamwork and what's that all about. So that's a big question. What's the secret of successful teams?

Vernice: The secret to successful teams to me is all about communication. And in that communication, we are all working towards the common goal. Because you asked me: What is the secret of teams? You didn't ask me what's the secret of groups.

Tim: Yeah, talk about that.

Vernice: A very huge distinction there, right? A team is a group of people moving forward towards a common goal. Right? And to move forward towards a common goal, we all have to know what the goal is. For us all to know what the goal is, we have to communicate. Then we have to figure out okay, how are we all going to move towards this common goal together?

That little one step down from that big chunk, the common goal, is where things get separated. That's where we talk about collaboration across the aisle, because we've got some people over here, some people over there; we have different ideologies about how things can be resolved and accomplished. And that's where the communication comes in.

And an open heart, an open mind, to be open to other perspectives of how it can get done. Because if I think my way is the only right way all the time, and Tim, you think your way is the only right way all the time, we're in trouble. We're in trouble.

TM: 31:11

Tim: Did you ever see that happen? Did you ever see people get just completely derailed because they could not listen, could not communicate?

Vernice: You mean if I was like watching Fox or CNN? No, I'm kidding.

Tim: No, I'm thinking more of if you're in a group or a team and you've worked in a lot of group settings, did you ever see people just shoot themselves in the foot, derail their career?

Vernice: Absolutely, absolutely. Now luckily, it was more in the training environment because we were put into situations where... we called it the LRC, the Learning Resource Center, where you're in this 20x20 or 30x30 sandy pit and there's a barrel and a 2x4 and a rope and an ammo can and you have to figure out how to get the ammo can over the wall without touching on the sand. And there are six people in your group.

Everybody has a different idea, and at a certain point, somebody is going to have to step up into leadership, and then we're all going to have to agree on who that leader is. When we all have ideas that we bring to the table, everybody just can't argue about it because the clock is also ticking because this is a timed evolution.

So, at the end of the day, we're going to have to agree on something, and then we're going to have to go for it. It was funny on some of them, and we didn't know this till afterwards – some of them didn't even have a solution. The whole meaning of the exercise was getting to the point of communication, collaboration and teamwork that at the end of the day led to execution. Because if you don't execute... it's almost like golf and you're putting – if you don't hit the golf ball, if you don't putt hard enough to get it in the hole and you're short of the hole, you're going to miss it 100% of the time.

But if you can at least get past the hole, you have a chance, right? I'm a huge golfer, just for those listening to the sound of my voice. Invite me to play golf, I am there.

TM: 33:14

Tim: It's one of those great sayings that belies a lot of wisdom: 100% of short putts never go in. I love that and I love the way you connected it to listening.

What makes a good listener?

Vernice: Again, being open. Listening is not, not interrupting until the person takes a breath and then you say what you're going to say. Listening is truly active listening – are you hearing me? Do you understand? You might not agree, but do you at least get what I'm saying? Right?

And if you can share back to me your interpretation of what you feel I said, that's real listening, and that's an art. Unfortunately, I think... you know, when people get in arguments, they're not listening to each other. They're listening for the comeback, they're listening for what are they going to throw back at the other person, versus listening for understanding and, again, resolution.

TM: 34:15

Tim: So, how do we solve, how do we fix that?

Vernice: We've got to start listening. It's really a mindset shift. The shift is: Do I actually want to hear what they have to say? Because it could actually be valuable. But sometimes when we pit ourselves against each other like we're enemies, we don't want to hear anything they have to say, when at the end of the day, we're actually not enemies, we're not on different teams; we're on the same team.

One mission, one goal, one team, one America, with liberty and justice for all. Oh. And I'm fully aware when my forefathers wrote that, they weren't talking about me. But guess what? In this country today, it does stand for me. So how are we, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all, and we create the destiny and the American dream that we know is possible?

TM: 35:18

Tim: I know when to wrap it up, and that's the place, because that's where we're going to leave it, because that's what we're trying to preach on this podcast a little bit is that civility and listening to each other and there are a lot of great ideas left, right and center, but I hope people are hearing what you're putting out there, Vernice.

Again, I can't thank you enough. You're doing some great stuff out there in the world and if we can ever help you, let us know and hopefully our paths will cross again, and I'll see if I can find a round of golf to invite you to, someday. That would be great.

Vernice FlyGirl Armour, what an honor for me. Thank you so much.

Ed: And that concludes this episode of our podcast. We encourage you to review and rate our podcast on Apple Podcasts, Google Play, Stitcher, or Spotify. We also encourage you to check out our other podcasts: "Our American States" and the special series, "Building Democracy." For the National Conference of State Legislatures, thanks for listening.