

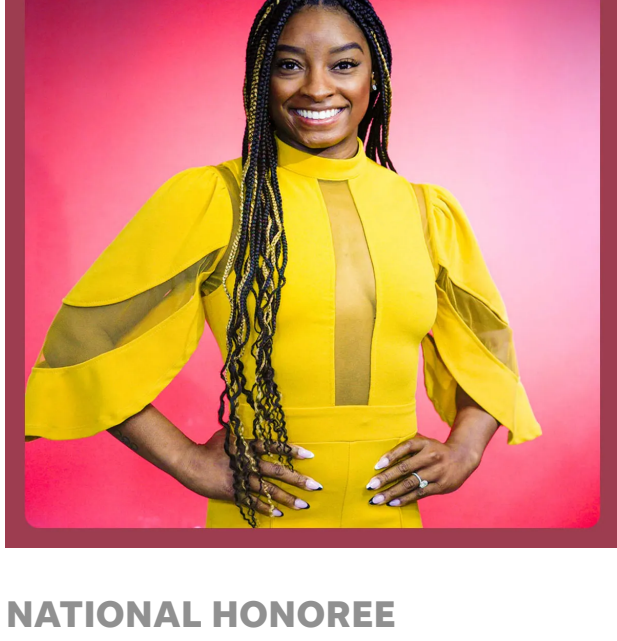
Meet USA TODAY's Women of the Year

Staff USA TODAY Network
4:34 PM CDT Mar. 21, 2022 | Updated: 4:34 PM CDT Mar. 21, 2022

These honorees are strong and resilient women who have been champions of change across the country, leading and inspiring as they promote and fight for equity, and give others a place to seek help and find hope.

- [Explore the Women of the Year project](#)
- [Nominate a strong and resilient woman](#)
- [Shop the merch collection](#)

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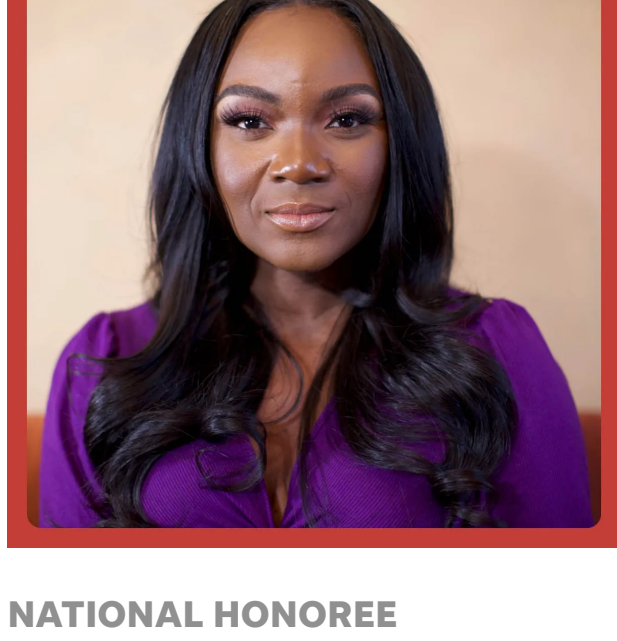
NATIONAL HONOREE
Simone Biles

Already the most decorated female gymnast of all time, she became a fierce advocate for mental health at the 2021 Summer Olympics.



NATIONAL HONOREE
Rosalind Brewer

One of corporate America's most prominent women, she is the only Black woman CEO of an S&P 500 company.



NATIONAL HONOREE
Kizzmekia Corbett

The National Institute of Health's lead scientist for coronavirus vaccine research, she helped develop the COVID-19 vaccine, saving millions of lives.

[Read her story](#)



NATIONAL HONOREE
Heather Cox Richardson

In her popular daily newsletter "Letters from an American," she empowers marginalized groups, who she says are more important than ever to the political landscape.



NATIONAL HONOREE
Roopali Desai

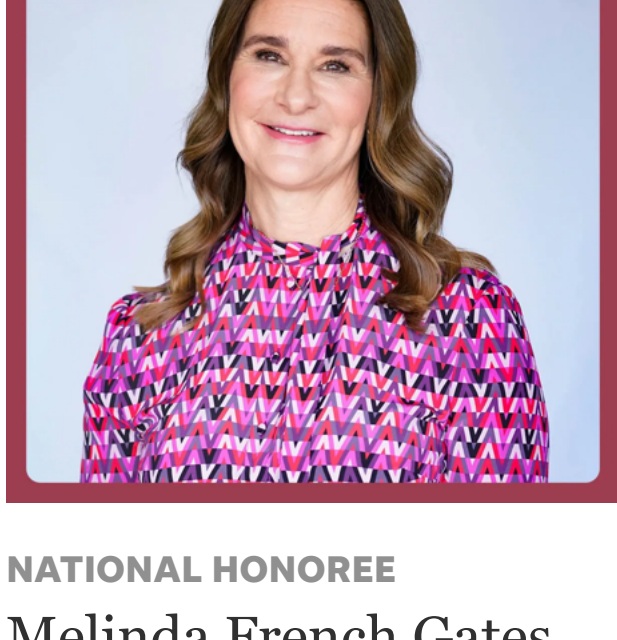
This attorney defended the integrity of the 2020 presidential election and helped launch a recreational marijuana program.

[Read her story](#)



NATIONAL HONOREE
Nina Garcia

The editor-in-chief of Elle magazine, she credits her Colombian heritage in helping her excel in the competitive world of fashion.



NATIONAL HONOREE
Melinda French Gates

Committed to donating most of her wealth in her lifetime, she's become a global advocate for women and girls.

[Read her story](#)



NATIONAL HONOREE
Kamala Harris

The nation's first-ever female vice president, she shattered the glass ceiling for women of color everywhere.

[Read her story](#)



NATIONAL HONOREE
Cheryl Horn

After her niece disappeared, she created an online community to spread awareness and information about the many missing indigenous women in Montana.

[Read her story](#)



NATIONAL HONOREE
Rachel Levine

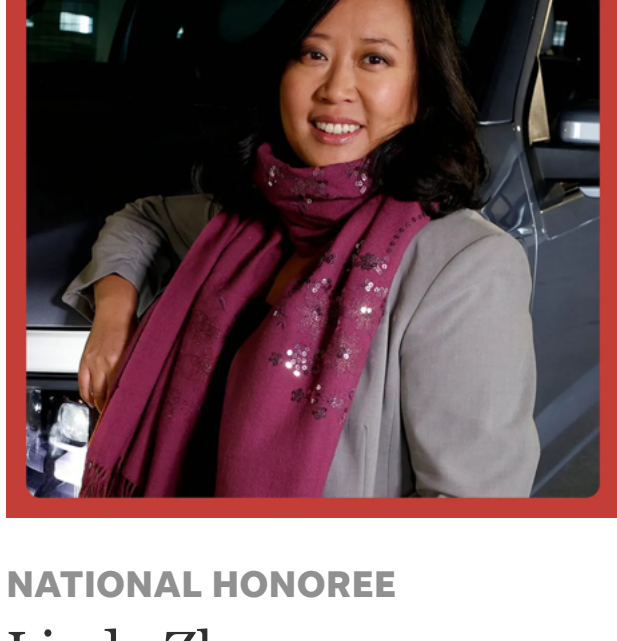
She became the highest-ranking openly transgender official when the Senate confirmed her as assistant secretary of health in October 2021.

[Read her story](#)



NATIONAL HONOREE
Janet Murguía

She's the president and CEO of UnidosUS, the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the U.S.



NATIONAL HONOREE
Linda Zhang

The chief engineer behind the revolutionary all-electric Ford F-150 Lightning, she's made history in the male-dominated auto industry.

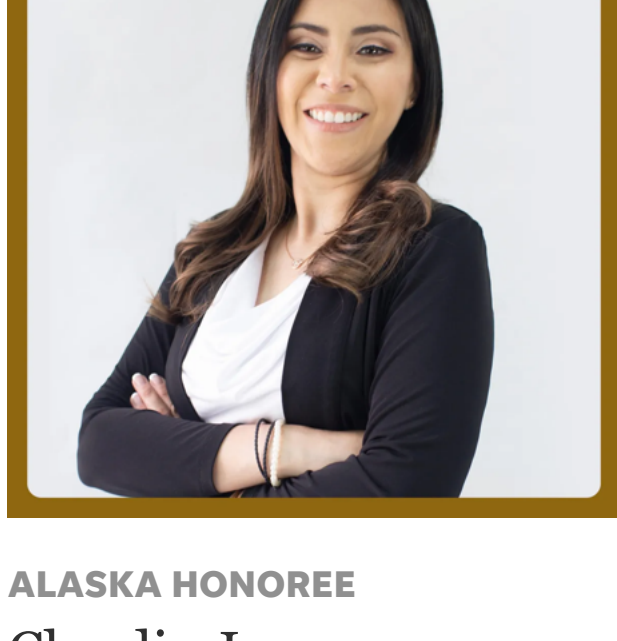
[Read her story](#)



ALABAMA HONOREE
Michelle Browder

She built a memorial to three enslaved women just blocks from a statue of the surgeon who experimented on them.

[Read her story](#)



ALASKA HONOREE
Claudia Jones

Education changed this Mexican immigrant's life. Now she's trying to help other Spanish speakers.

[Read her story](#)



ARIZONA HONOREE
Roopali Desai

This attorney defended the integrity of the 2020 presidential election and helped launch a recreational marijuana program.

[Read her story](#)



ARKANSAS HONOREE
Michele Wright

She co-founded the National Organization of African Americans with Cystic Fibrosis, providing education and resources.

[Read her story](#)



CALIFORNIA HONOREE
Tara VanDerveer

She became the all-time winningest coach in women's college basketball, then won her third national title.

[Read her story](#)



COLORADO HONOREE
Jane DeDecker

This sculptor and women's history buff is spearheading the upcoming national women's suffrage monument.

[Read her story](#)



CONNECTICUT HONOREE
Alexandra Ford

Inspired by her young cancer patients, this nurse stayed dedicated through COVID-19.

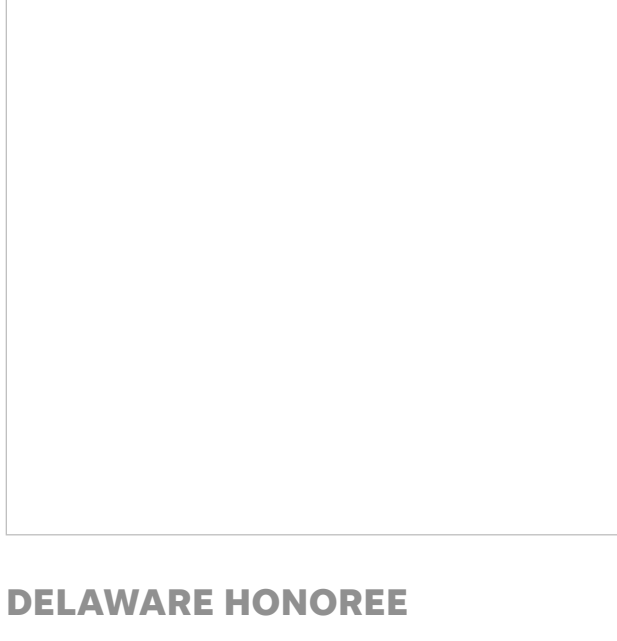
[Read her story](#)



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HONOREE
Rachel Levine

She became the highest-ranking openly transgender official when the Senate confirmed her as assistant secretary of health in October 2021.

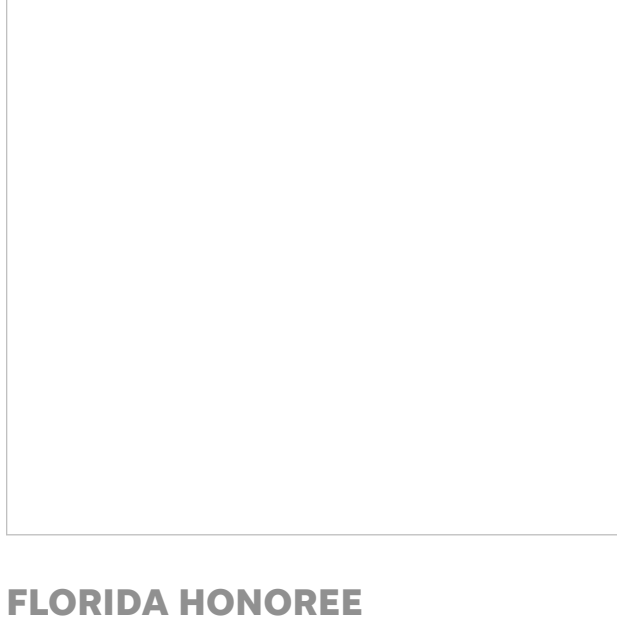
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DELAWARE HONOREE
Dr. Sandra Gibney

She saw the horror of opioids up close. Now she's trying to help, neighborhood by neighborhood.

[Read her story](#)



FLORIDA HONOREE
Alina Alonso

This doctor spent her entire career in public health. In 2020, she became a public face of the pandemic.

[Read her story](#)



GEORGIA HONOREE
Kimberly Barnes

This marketing veteran is finding ways to solve hunger across America, one meal at a time.

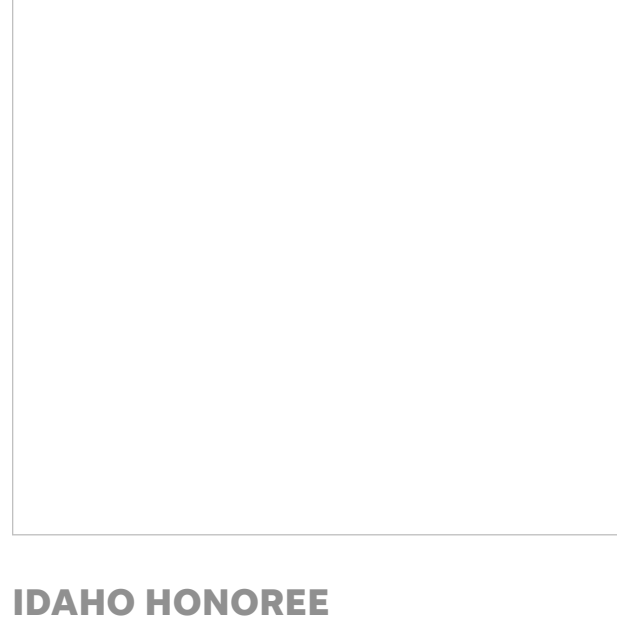
[Read her story](#)



HAWAII HONOREE
Leela Bilmes Goldstein

When the pandemic hit Hawaii women hardest, her foundation stepped in to help.

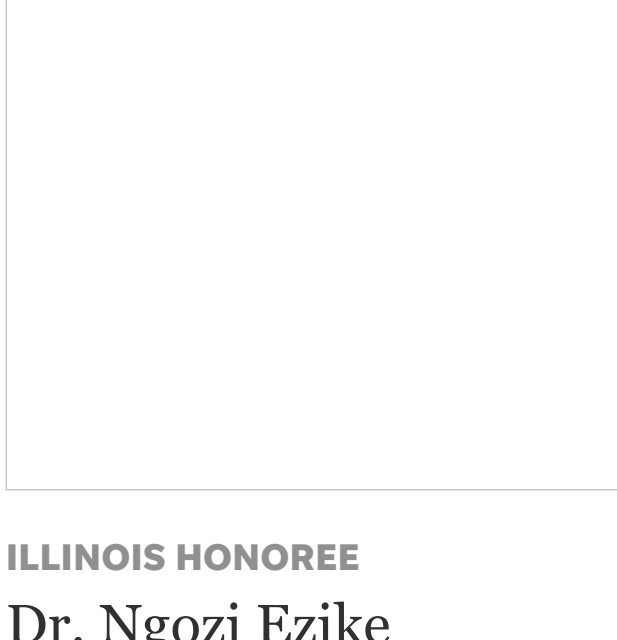
[Read her story](#)



IDAHO HONOREE
Cherie Loeger

Determined to destigmatize periods, she's also working to make care for them more sustainable.

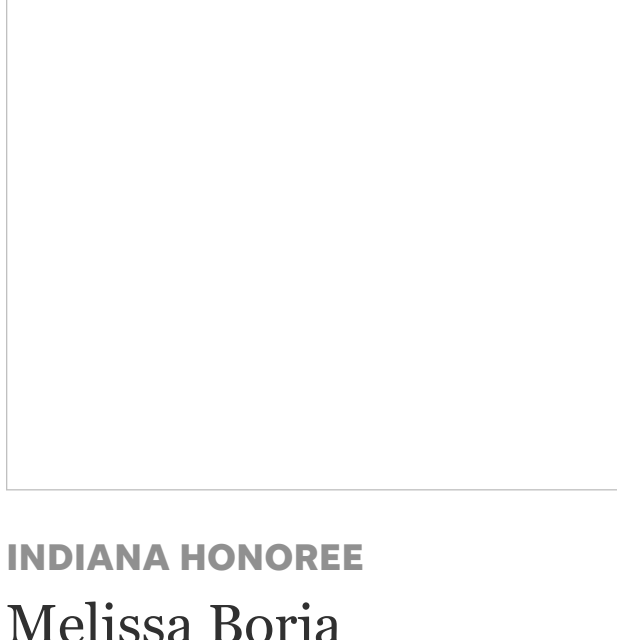
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ILLINOIS HONOREE
Dr. Ngozi Ezike

She is the first Black woman to lead her state's department of public health, a 145-year-old institution.

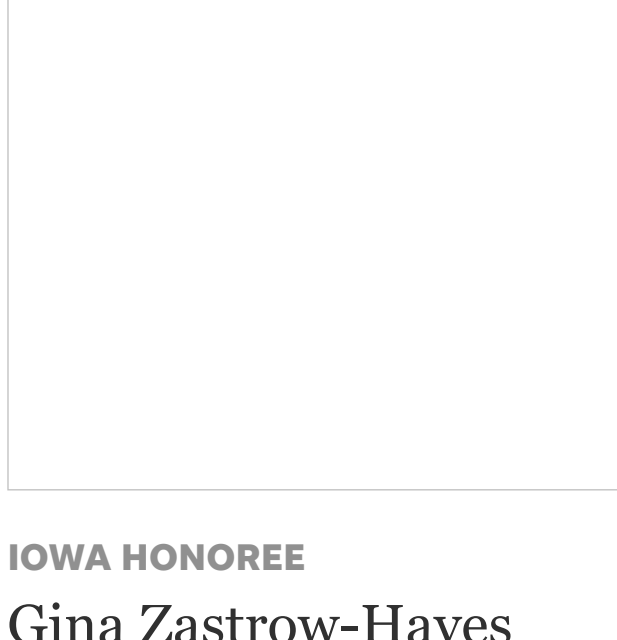
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INDIANA HONOREE
Melissa Borja

She led a team of researchers to track anti Asian racism during the pandemic.

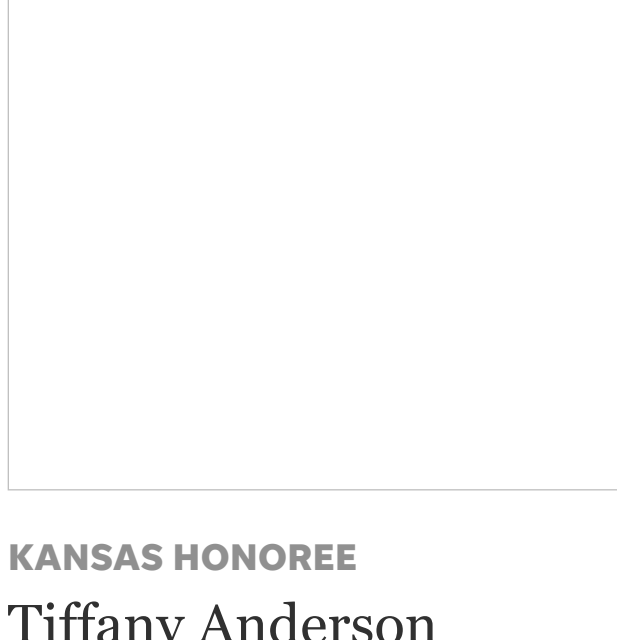
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IOWA HONOREE
Gina Zastrow-Hayes

This crop genomics and her team helped make COVID testing cheaper, faster and more reliable — twice.

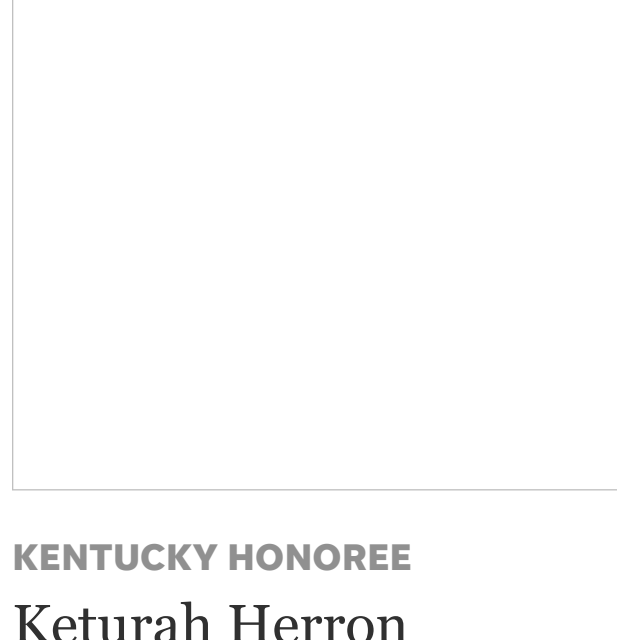
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KANSAS HONOREE
Tiffany Anderson

This superintendent knows education can be the difference between life and death.

[Read her story](#)



KENTUCKY HONOREE
Keturah Herron

This activist was instrumental in getting Breonna's Law passed in Louisville.

[Read her story](#)



LOUISIANA HONOREE
Chantelle Gary

She and her family traveled across America, giving "COVID Care" packages to homeless populations in different cities.

[Read her story](#)



MAINE HONOREE
Michele Meyer

This state representative created a Facebook group to help people support each other during the greatest health crisis in a century.

[Read her story](#)



MARYLAND HONOREE
Leathia West

This nonprofit volunteer founded a nonprofit that distributes well-stocked backpacks to children in need.

[Read her story](#)



MASSACHUSETTS HONOREE
Marlene Sallo

She's spent decades advocating for access, children and civil rights up and down the East Coast.

[Read her story](#)



MICHIGAN HONOREE
Dr. Joneigh Khaldun

As a face of public health, she helped guide her state through different stages of the pandemic.

[Read her story](#)



MINNESOTA HONOREE
Sheletta Brundidge

An activist and author, this Emmy Award-winning comedian started her own podcast to share Black stories.

[Read her story](#)



MISSISSIPPI HONOREE
Aileen Stingley

This dentist has spent more than 30 years helping Mississippians access dental and health care.

[Read her story](#)



MISSOURI HONOREE
Robin Carnahan

This elected civil servant and lectioned official helps support federal agencies and their basic functions.

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MONTANA HONOREE
Cheryl Horn

After her niece disappeared, she created an online community to spread awareness and information about the missing Indigenous women in her state.

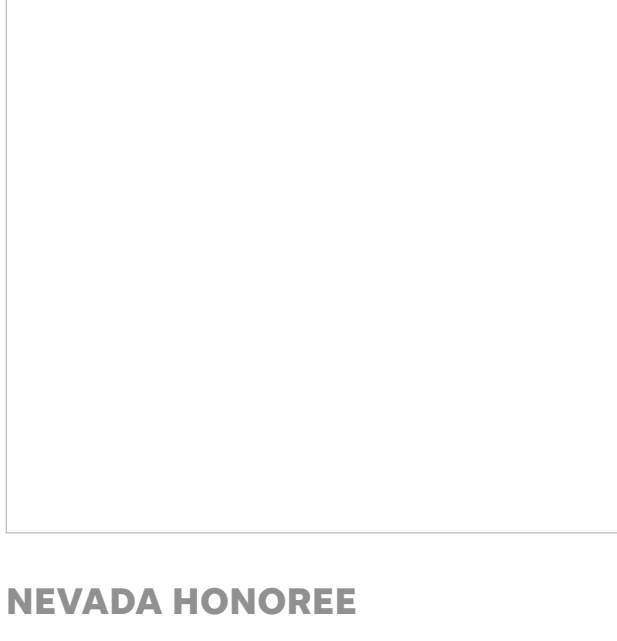
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NEBRASKA HONOREE
Carmen Tapio

She isn't just leading the state's largest Black-owned business — she's helping grow the next one.

[Read her story](#)



NEVADA HONOREE
Autumn Harry

A powerful Native voice, she's looking to change the landscape of Indigenous and environmental activism.

[Read her story](#)



NEW HAMPSHIRE HONOREE
Claire Bloom

After retiring from the Navy, she built a nonprofit to feed hungry school children facing food insecurity.

[Read her story](#)



NEW JERSEY HONOREE
Tawanda Jones

Her performing arts center has given thousands of children a safe, fun and educational outlet.

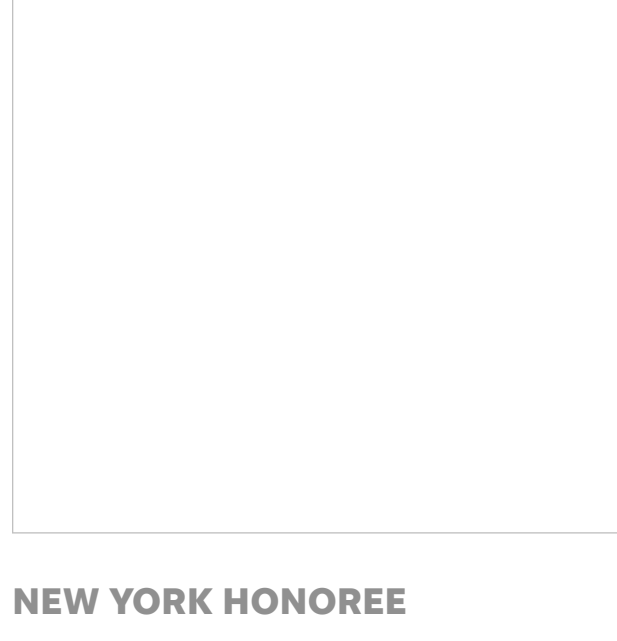
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NEW MEXICO HONOREE
Karen Trujillo

She dedicated her life to K-12 public education and encouraged others to do the same.

[Read her story](#)



NEW YORK HONOREE
Sandra Lindsay

This nurse became the first person in America to get the COVID-19 vaccine after months of caring for sick patients.

[Read her story](#)



NORTH CAROLINA HONOREE
Kizzmekia Corbett

The National Institute of Health's lead scientist for coronavirus vaccine research, she helped develop the COVID-19 vaccine, saving millions of lives.

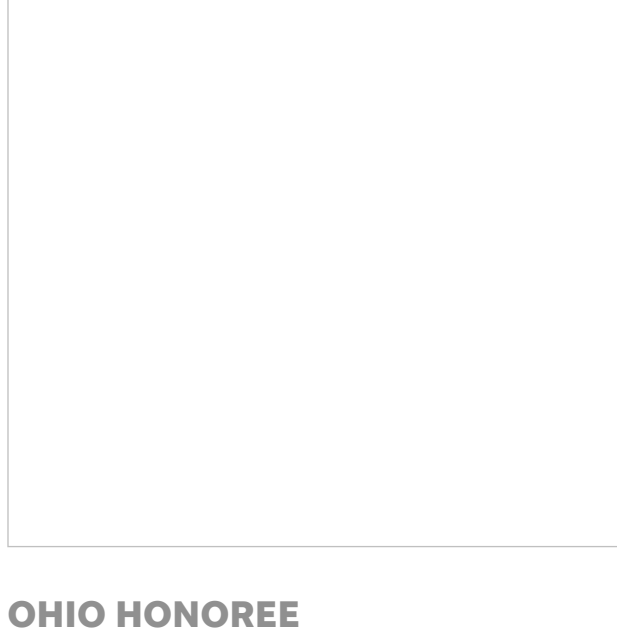
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NORTH DAKOTA HONOREE
Erica Thunder

As the state's Commissioner of Labor and Human Rights, she's an advocate for Indigenous people.

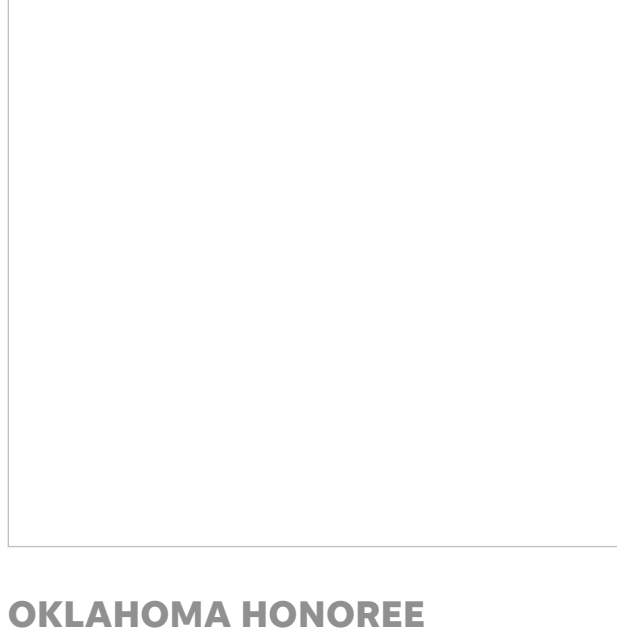
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OHIO HONOREE
Dr. Amy Acton

COVID-19 catapulted her from a relatively obscure cabinet position into a folk hero of sorts.

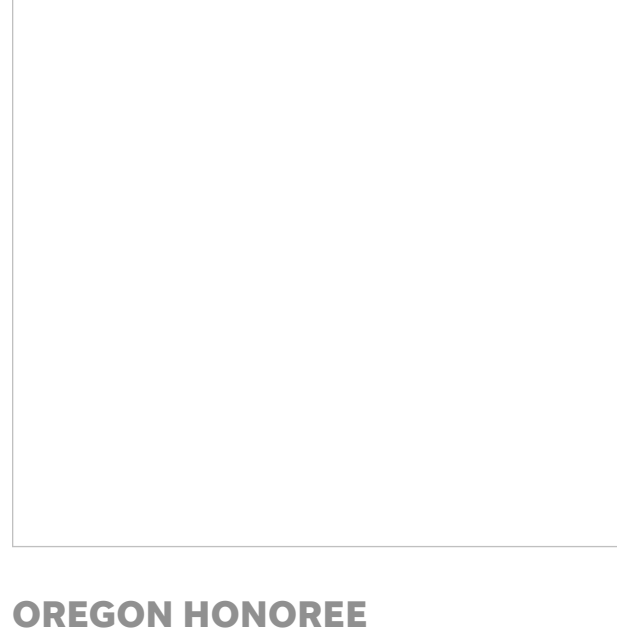
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OKLAHOMA HONOREE
Caylee Dodson

She helped open a much-needed grocery store in what was widely considered a food desert.

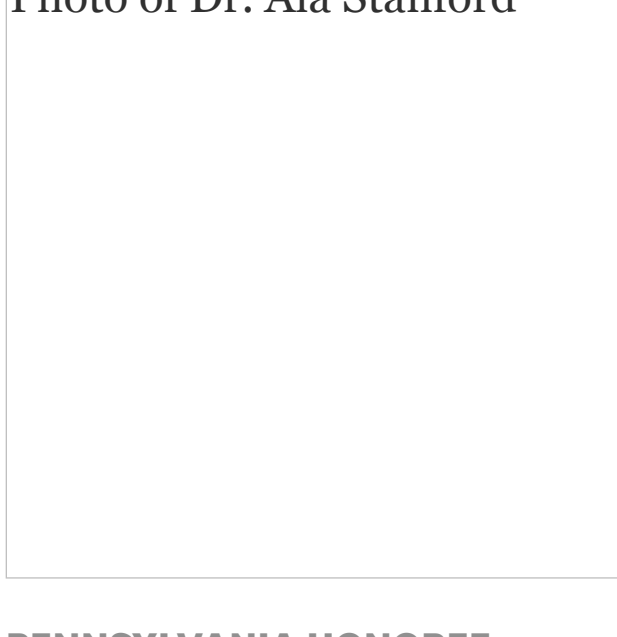
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OREGON HONOREE
Cindy Chauran

After a wildfire swept through her community, she launched a fund to help survivors in the recovery, cleanup and rebuilding of their communities.

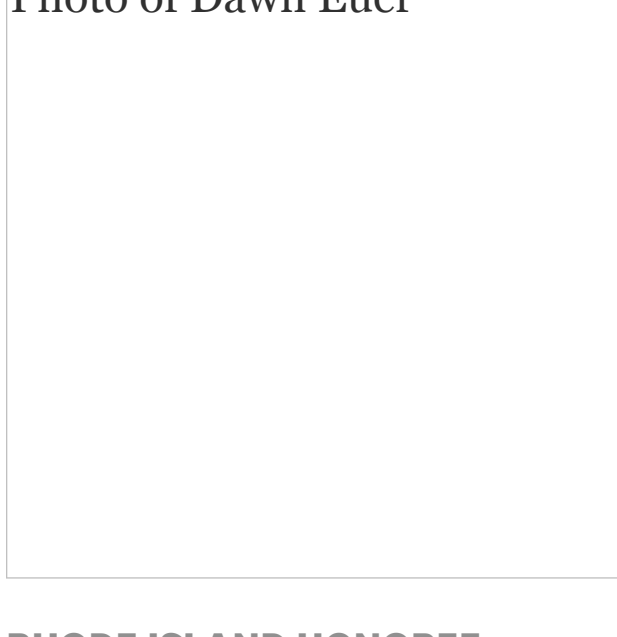
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PENNSYLVANIA HONOREE
Dr. Ala Stanford

She fought health disparities brought to light by COVID-19, helping thousands access free testing and vaccines.

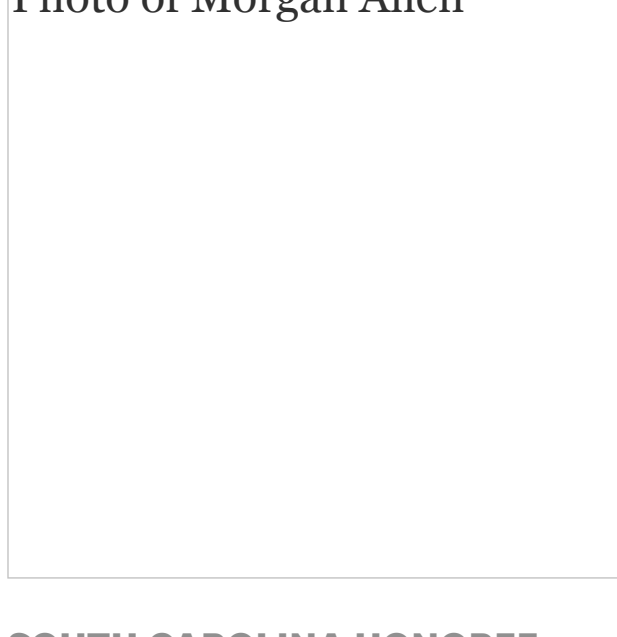
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RHODE ISLAND HONOREE
Dawn Euer

Among her many legislative achievements, this state senator co-sponsored landmark climate legislation.

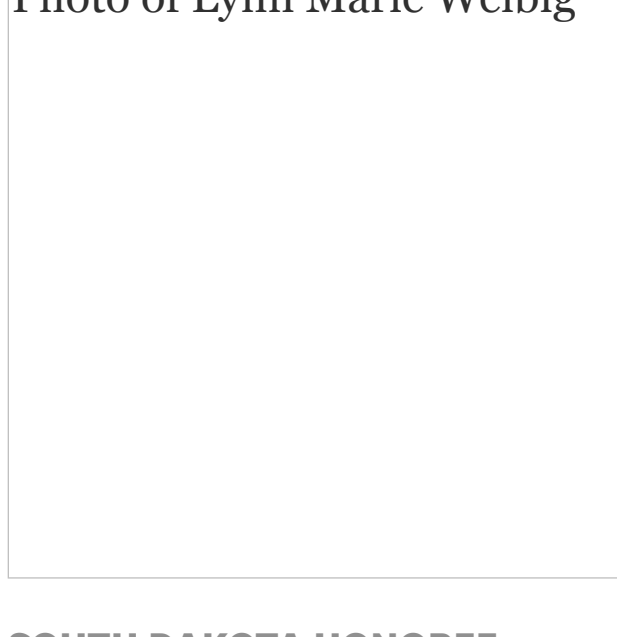
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SOUTH CAROLINA HONOREE
Morgan Allen

Her initiative has provided more than 130,000 meals since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

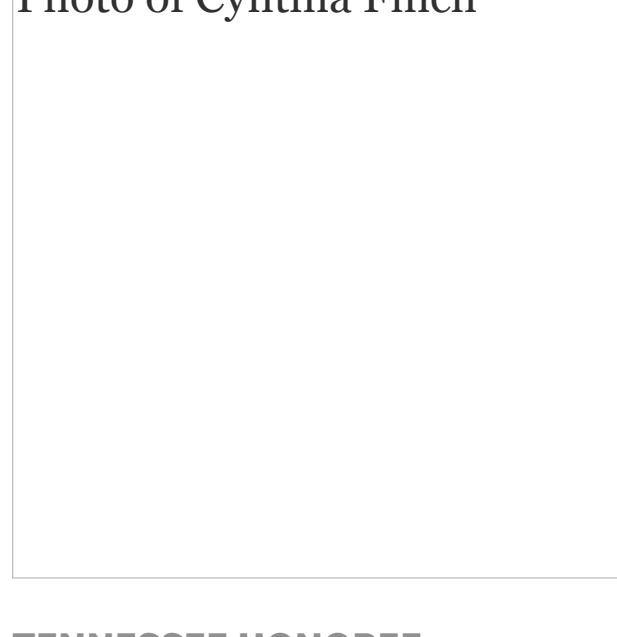
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SOUTH DAKOTA HONOREE
Lynn Marie Welbig

This lobbyist likes to call herself "a nun that the Lord let loose."

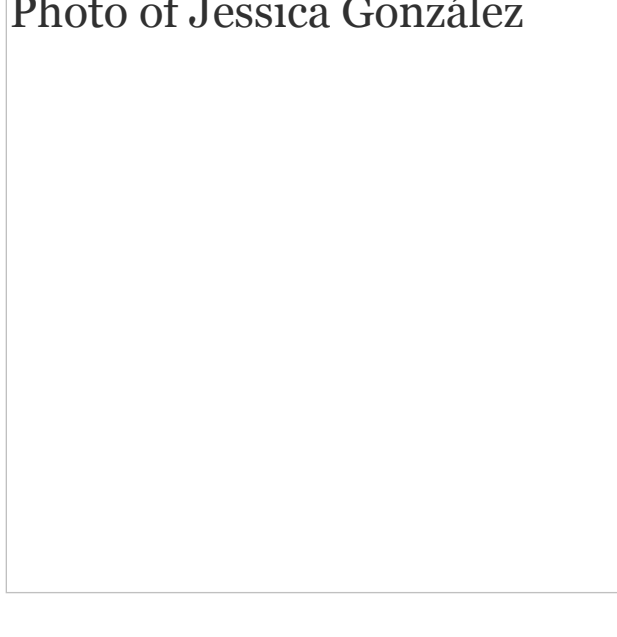
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TENNESSEE HONOREE
Cynthia Finch

A longtime public health official, she was key to getting more than 80,000 people tested, vaccinated and educated.

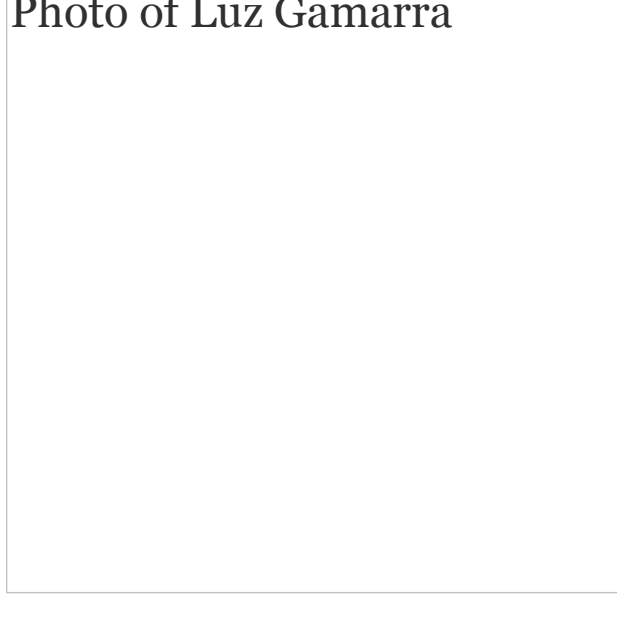
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TEXAS HONOREE
Jessica González

During two terms in the state legislature, she's fought tirelessly for voting rights and worked to protect the LGBTQ+ community.

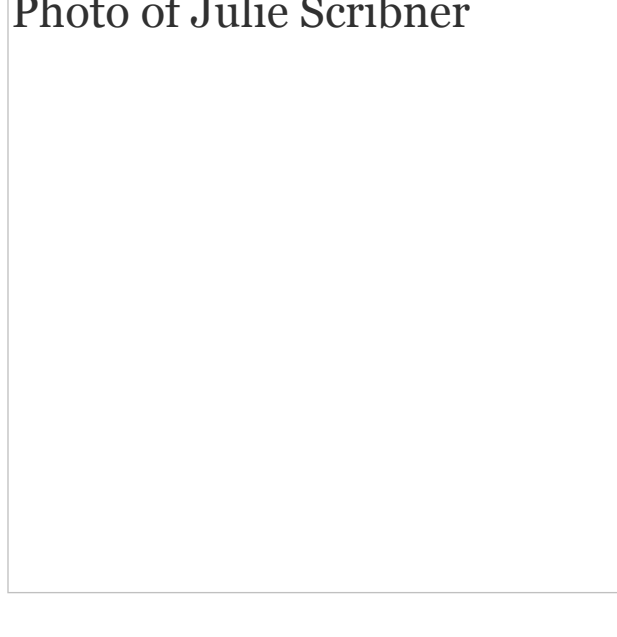
[Read her story](#)



UTAH HONOREE
Luz Gamarra

She helps immigrants and English-as-a-second-language students to get into college, then connects them with mentors.

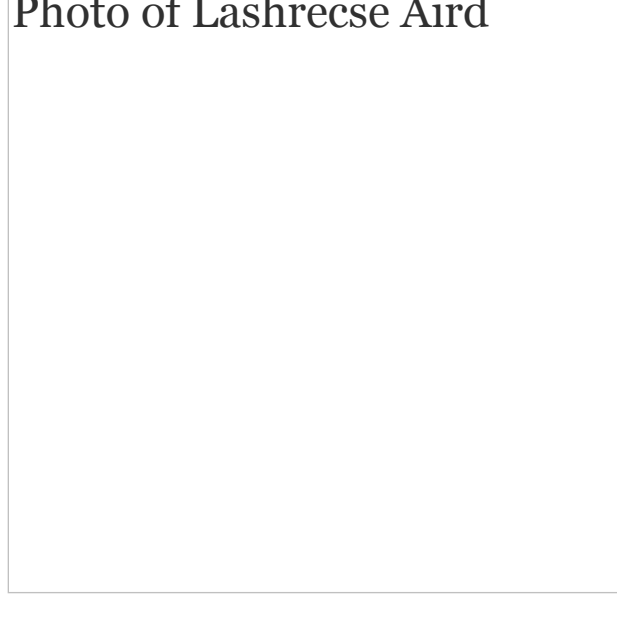
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VERMONT HONOREE
Julie Scribner

This retired police captain is leading the charge to get more women in law enforcement across the U.S.

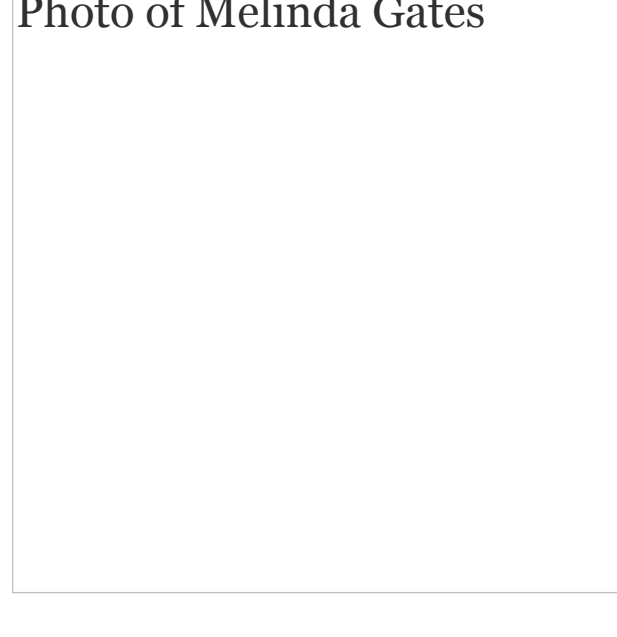
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VIRGINIA HONOREE
Lashreese Aird

She helped ban no-knock warrants and sponsored a resolution that declared racism a public-health issue.

[Read her story](#)



WASHINGTON HONOREE
Melinda Gates

Committed to donating most of her wealth in her lifetime, she's become a global advocate for women and girls.

[Read her story](#)



WEST VIRGINIA HONOREE
Gina Moore

This nurse helped organize several vaccine clinics in 2021, getting thousands of people vaccinated.

[Read her story](#)



WISCONSIN HONOREE
Julie Doniere

From her ER, she fights three epidemics simultaneously: opioid addiction, gun violence and COVID-19.

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