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## **Governor Scott Recognizes Four Florida Veterans with the Governor's Medal of Merit**



**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** – Today, during a meeting of the Florida Cabinet, Governor Rick Scott recognized Florida veterans Judge T. Patt Maney, Lieutenant Colonel John Steele, Colonel John Pelleriti and Paul Martel with the Governor's Medal of Merit.

Governor Scott said, "I'm honored to recognize these veterans with Medals of Merit today. They have courageously served our country and they continue to serve their veteran communities. I am proud to join all of Florida in recognizing them as selfless American heroes."

### **About the Medal of Merit Recipients:**

**Judge T. Patt Maney**

Judge T. Patt Maney is a retired Army Reserve Brigadier General and Okaloosa County Judge and an advocate for Florida veterans. During a deployment to Afghanistan in 2005, Judge Maney sustained a traumatic brain when a roadside bomb detonated under their vehicle. After multiple surgeries and thousands of hours of physical therapy, Judge Maney regained his cognitive ability and continued on to serve as a county judge. In 2012, Governor Rick Scott signed "The T. Patt Maney Veterans' Treatment Intervention Act" into law, which authorized the establishment of veterans' court to address the substance abuse and mental health needs of veterans within Florida's criminal justice system. More than 30 Veterans Courts are now in operation in Florida.

#### **Lieutenant Colonel John L. Steele**

Lieutenant Colonel John Steele currently serves as the Florida Air National Guard Advisor to the State Emergency Operations Center's Air Operations Branch. During Hurricane Irma, Lt. Col. Steele helped coordinate early integration of air mobility and rescue assets including over 800 mobility sorties that moved over 3,500 people and over 1,300 tons of equipment. Lt Col Steele's 27-year career of outstanding service includes two deployments involving combat flight operations over Bosnia and six deployments in support of the Global War on Terror.

#### **Colonel John Pelleriti**

Colonel Pelleriti's exceptional 25-year distinguished career as an Active Duty Officer and Florida Guardsman have included increasingly responsible key command and staff positions, as well as three overseas deployments to safeguard our "American Way of Life." Recently, under the direction of the Adjutant General of Florida, Col. Pelleriti lead the military response to Hurricane Irma, which has been recognized by senior officials of the Department of Defense for their good work.

#### **Paul Martel**

Paul Martel is an Army veteran and formerly served as a national vice commander of The American Legion, the nation's largest wartime veterans' service organization. A life member of the American Legion, he has held every post from State Commander in 2008-2009 to national sergeant-at-arms from 2009-2010. From 2010 – 2015, Martel served as chairman of the Florida Veterans Council.

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