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**NASCA Awards Christi Branscom, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of General Services,
Prestigious National Ray Walton Leadership Award**

RICHMOND, VA - The National Association of State Chief Administrators (NASCA) announced that Christi Branscom, Tennessee's Department of General Services Commissioner, has been awarded the association's 2023 National Ray Walton Leadership Award.

Ms. Branscom received the honor on September 19th 2023, during NASCA's award ceremony at the 2023 Institute in Indianapolis, Indiana. The highly competitive national award recognizes a state Chief Administrator for their passion, outstanding service, leadership and commitment to state government.

"Commissioner Christi Branscom is a trailblazing Tennessean whose career in state government service may not be long, but her impact in a short time has been significant. Commissioner Branscom brought her experience in local government and her private sector expertise in real estate, construction, and business to the state in 2019, when she became Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of General Services (DGS). Since then, she has lifted her agency to national prominence, improved workplace culture and undertaken historic real estate and capital projects in her home state." says Joe Damico, Director of Virginia's Department of General Services, and 2021's recipient of NASCA's Ray Walton Leadership Award.

In her role as the Commissioner of the Tennessee DGS, since January 2019, Christi Branscom manages five divisions, which include centralized procurement for State departments (CPO); management of the State's real estate assets (STREAM); motor vehicle and equipment management, and surplus (VAM); printing, media, and photographic services; postal services; warehousing and distribution (Document Solutions); State employee parking, badging, conference centers, and shuttle services (Division of Administration); and assistance to small businesses and businesses owned by minorities, women, and veterans.

Under her leadership, DGS has been named a Top Workplace in Middle Tennessee for the fourth consecutive year (2020-2023). Branscom has focused on employee engagement, as she wants employees to enjoy their work and each other. Over the last four years, she has developed task forces for each division, dug into survey feedback, and made improvements.

A few of Christi's significant accomplishments in her role for the State of Tennessee include:

- **Real Estate Master Plan** - aims to manage real estate efficiently, implement real estate industry best practices, improve recurring building maintenance funding, and develop and implement strategic real estate plans. The 10-year net benefit of the plan is estimated at \$156M by disposing of land no longer needed, totaling 1,331 acres, exiting leases, and selling select buildings totaling approximately 2,670k SF.
- **Project Tetris** saves the State \$10M a year in operating costs. And over ten years, it will save the State over \$100M. This project resulted from the State implementing Alternative Workplace Solutions, which rapidly evolved during the pandemic and led to Project Tetris, which has allowed DGS to right-size departments and reduce our average square feet of space from 317 to 175 square feet per employee.
- **STEPS** is the initiative to collect and strengthen the quality of the State's real estate data, eliminate excess real property, and increase transparency. On June 30, 2023, DGS will launch the TN State-Owned Land Dashboard, a public-facing Geographic Information System (GIS) map that provides a searchable database for a more robust analysis of state-owned property.
- Additionally, several **high-profile capital improvement projects** have been completed during Branscom's tenure, including renovations to the historic John Sevier Building, the new Library and Archives Building, the new Tennessee State Museum, and the opening of several new inns, including Paris Landing, and Fall Creek Falls, and various welcome centers, restaurants, and facilities at popular State parks across Tennessee. Plus, the statewide replacement of all the Tennessee Highway Patrol facilities, many of them dating back to the 1950s.
- Branscom worked with Tennessee Governor Bill Lee to propose the most significant capital budget in history, prioritizing deferred maintenance of existing State facilities and reducing and reconfiguring the State's real estate footprint. This historic budget also included the **Multi-Agency Law Enforcement Training Academy**, the largest capital project ever approved by the State Building Commission in Tennessee history at \$415M.

Branscom joined NASCA in January 2019 after her appointment. In service to NASCA, she joined the NASCA Executive Committee in September 2019. In February 2021, Branscom was named vice president, and in October 2021, she became president, a role in which she still serves. **She is the first woman to be named president of NASCA**, and she has led the organization through a challenging transition to a new association management company in hopes of gaining improved service and ensuring NASCA's position as the premier state government association.

Commissioner Branscom is a member of the Governor's cabinet, a role she has served in since January 2019.

Branscom brings broad experience working in the public and private sectors. Her knowledge as an attorney, experience in commercial real estate law and development, and construction as the founder of a woman-owned construction company has helped Governor Lee elevate the State's real estate strategy as Tennessee seeks to be the best-managed state, providing high-quality services at the lowest possible price to taxpayers.

Additionally, Branscom serves on several boards, including the University of Tennessee Haslam College of Business Dean's Advisory Council, the Leadership Tennessee Board of Directors, the Keep the Tennessee River Beautiful Board of Directors, and the Leaders Council for the Women Business Collaborative, Nashville Chapter. Under her leadership, DGS is the first state department to join AWIN (Advancing Women in Nashville), which focuses on advancing leaders, change, and community.

Here are a few additional roles where Branscom serves the State.

- **Shared Services Sub-Cabinet** – Branscom regularly brings together the Department of General Services (Real Estate, Procurement), IT (STS), Human Resources, and Finance and Administration to share common goals and implement strategies to fulfill the Governor's initiatives.
- **AWS (Alternative Workplace Solutions) Initiative** –This collaborative project includes IT, Human Resources, and STREAM. This initiative requires these departments and divisions to work together to connect new office space plans with mobile technology solutions and the employee performance review program (IPPs).
- **Megasite Authority of West Tennessee** – The Megasite Authority's goal is to promote economic development, generate high-quality jobs at the Megasite and in the surrounding areas, and encourage and promote the development of manufacturing, warehouse, distribution, office, restaurant, retail, hotel, recycling, utilities, educational institutions, etc. Branscom serves on the Megasite Authority's Board of Directors.
- She also leads **DGS's DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging)** Council. Established in 2021, the Council aims to increase awareness, understanding, and appreciation of each other's differences.

The employees of DGS have shared the following comments about the Commissioner in the annual employee engagement survey collected from 2020 to 2023:

"The respectful culture is one thing that makes me want to stay with DGS. The leadership is another. We are so blessed to have Commissioner Branscom leading this department. She is a rock star as a leader! She is highly respected. And yet, even as busy as she is, she is responsive and approachable. This is so refreshing."

"Commissioner Branscom models leadership and seems to hold other leaders accountable. During the past few years, she and a few other executive leaders have been listening and following through on things."

"DGS, as a department, treats employees with respect. It permeates everything. Our workplace culture is outstanding. Our Commissioner is top-notch! She is a strong leader who cares deeply about her team. This is a great illustration of top-down leadership at its best. She sets a great example for her staff to follow."

The **National Walton Leadership Award** was established to recognize state Chief Administrators for their passion, outstanding service, leadership and commitment to state government. The award was created to honor Ray Walton for his service and dedication to state government and to NASCA. Ray Walton served as the Executive Director for NASCA from February 2011 through February 2015 and the former Director and Chief Operating Officer for the Iowa Department of Administrative Services.

ABOUT NASCA

The National Association of State Chief Administrators (NASCA) is the leading organization advancing professional development and best management solutions for the administrative functions of state government. The association provides state chief administrators with the opportunity to increase their knowledge of state government administration through education, networking and information exchange on state government trends, leading edge innovations, standards and best practices.

NASCA's mission is to help state chief administrators and their teams strategically transform state government operations through the power of shared knowledge and thought leadership.

For more information about NASCA's Awards Program, please visit www.nasca.org.

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