

Lifetime Achievement Awardee - Pat Spearman

Rev. Dr. Patricia A. Spearman, born in Indianapolis, Indiana, has dedicated her life to advancing equality through service as a military officer, minister, and Nevada State Senator. As a Black lesbian woman, she has broken barriers and championed policies that protect women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and marginalized communities. Her commitment to civil rights and social justice has left a lasting impact on state and national policy.

Spearman served as a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army and became a certified Equal Opportunity Manager, advocating for gender equity within the armed forces. After her military career, she earned a Master of Divinity and served as a minister, using the pulpit to address systemic injustice and elevate women's voices in faith and community leadership.

Elected to the Nevada Senate in 2012, Spearman led efforts to ratify the federal Equal Rights Amendment in 2017, positioning Nevada as a national leader in gender equity. She championed legislation to close the wage gap, ensure reproductive freedom, and protect LGBTQ+ rights, including the collection of inclusive demographic data and protections against gender-based hate crimes. Her bills have centered women of color, transgender women, and LGBTQ+ youth, recognizing their unique vulnerabilities.

Spearman has also been a strong advocate for veterans, especially women, pushing for expanded healthcare and support services. Her legacy reflects a lifetime of breaking down barriers and building policies that affirm dignity, equity, and justice. Through leadership across the military, ministry, and legislature, she has empowered countless others to claim space and lead boldly.