



## **James R. Frezzell, Secretary, Albany Water Board**

James R. Frezzell is a dedicated advocate for veterans, a civil rights pioneer, and a proud alumnus of the U.S. Naval Academy Prep School. Born and raised in Monessen, Pennsylvania, he excelled both academically and athletically, earning recognition as a standout football player, Vice-President of the Glee Club and receiving scholarship offers from over 50 colleges and universities, including the U.S. Naval Academy.

In 1964, Mr. Frezzell became one of only nine Black Midshipman among 4,000 at the U.S. Naval Academy. While excelling in military training and athletics, he endured significant racial discrimination and harassment from his peers. These challenges, compounded by a lack of institutional support, ultimately led to his departure after his plebe year. His experiences are documented in Dr. Robert J. Schneller Jr.'s book, *Blue & Gold and Black: Racial Integration of the U.S. Naval Academy*, a pivotal history of the integration of Black Midshipman at the Naval Academy.

Undeterred, Mr. Frezzell went on to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics and Physics from California State College (now California University of Pennsylvania) in 1969, where he also became a proud member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. and the 1969 Championship Football Team. He attended Rutgers Graduate School where he was an Adjunct Professor in Industrial Relations. Motivated by his firsthand understanding of disenfranchisement, Mr. Frezzell dedicated his career to serving others.

Mr. Frezzell is a Human Resources professional. He was responsible for the Corporate Division of Employee/Labor Relations Department. He was the Chief Spokesman representing corporate negotiations during contract negotiations with the Teamsters, Steelworkers, SEIU, and Operating Engineers across the United States. In addition, Mr. Frezzell was responsible for the Division of Human Resources for non-union faculties. He also served as an Employee Relations Associate with Governor Mario Cuomo's Office of Employee Relations. He worked as a Veterans Employment Representative with the New York State Department of Labor Workforce Program, helping Veterans within the inner city secure meaningful employment.

As Vice-President of the Urban League of Bergen County New Jersey, and as Vice-President of the Executive Committee of the Albany Chapter of the NAACP, Mr. Frezzell continued to champion social justice and equity.

A devoted member of the Metropolitan NTM Baptist Church, where he serves as a member of the Progressive "500" Ministry, Mr. Frezzell actively supports youth and community programs, including initiatives to improve opportunities for underserved children.

Mr. Frezzell's deep connection to the Naval Academy endures through his involvement with the Albany chapter of the Naval Academy Alumni Association and his efforts as a minority recruiter. He also served on Congressman Paul Tonko's and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's Service Academies Candidate Selection Committees. In recognition of his legacy, two Honor Chairs bearing his name are prominently displayed in the Alumni Hall and the Navy Marine Corps Stadium at the U.S. Naval Academy. The Honor Chairs were donated by his roommate at Annapolis, Admiral Kevin F. Delaney and wife Patricia Delaney and family. This tribute symbolizes Mr. Frezzell's historic impact on Navy history and his unwavering commitment to equal opportunity, justice, and equity.

Mr. Frezzell credits football recruiters Tony Urbanik and Steve Belichick for their integrity and steadfast support during a formative time in his life. In an era marked by division, their mentorship and solidarity served as enduring examples of the courage required to stand for fairness and inclusion.

In his role on the Albany Water Board, Mr. Frezzell is dedicated to ensuring that Albany residents have access to high-quality water. He also advocates for responsible labor practices and strategic investment in the Capital District.