



November 18, 2024

The Honorable Jack Reed
The Honorable Roger Wicker
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Reed and Wicker:

We, the undersigned military support organizations, call for your support of Section 1113 in the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)—known as the READINESS Act. This provision addresses a longstanding, critical issue: the employment challenges faced by military spouses within the federal workforce.

As the nation's largest employer, the federal government should be setting the gold standard for supporting military spouse employment. For many spouses stationed overseas, the federal government is often the only viable employer. Yet, military spouses continue to face barriers to retaining their jobs when they are forced to relocate. Section 1113 creates a path to much-needed flexibility and stability.

While private companies like Amazon, Starbucks, and Boeing have proactively committed to supporting military spouses through initiatives modeled on the READINESS Act, the federal government has been slow to follow. Military spouse unemployment remains a staggering 21%, more than 3X the national average.

Military families face immense pressure from childcare shortages and inadequate housing to the added burden of high unemployment and underemployment rates of military spouses. In many cases, a dual income is vital for military families to achieve financial stability—particularly given the rising cost of living. Yet, these families are asked to sacrifice that stability with every Permanent Change of Station (PCS) move.

Section 1113 addresses these challenges head-on by providing military spouses who are federal employees with the career flexibility they need to continue working, even as their families are required to relocate.

Key Provisions of Section 1113:

- 1. Remote Work Flexibility:** Federal agencies will assess positions for remote work potential, allowing military spouses to remain employed during PCS moves.
- 2. Reassignment and Alternative Worksites:** Agencies can offer military spouses reassignment to equivalent positions in new duty locations or provide options to work from alternative worksites.
- 3. Leave Without Pay (LWOP):** For spouses unable to work remotely or be reassigned, LWOP ensures they remain federal employees and retain essential non-financial benefits, such as security

clearances, easing their re-entry into the workforce when positions become available. LWOP should cover the duration of the service members' PCS orders.

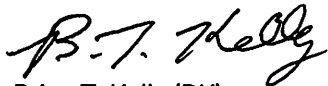
The READINESS Act is championed by federally employed military spouses as a framework to help employers retain top talent. It offers a flexible approach that supports employers in finding viable retention solutions without imposing undue burdens on those unable to retain an employee.

A spouse losing a job due to a PCS move can lead to financial strain for the family. Section 1113 provides a commonsense, cost-neutral solution that benefits both military families and the Department of Defense by ensuring military spouses can continue contributing to their family's financial security and military readiness.

When a spouse loses their job due to a PCS move, it can place significant financial strain on the family. Section 1113 offers a practical, cost-neutral solution that helps military spouses maintain their financial contributions to their family while supporting overall military readiness, benefiting both families and the Department of Defense.

Thank you for your continued leadership and commitment to the well-being of those who serve our country.

Sincerely,



Brian T. Kelly (BK)
Lieutenant General, U.S. Air Force (Ret)
President and CEO
Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)

CC: The Honorable Mike Rogers, Chairman, House Committee on Armed Services
The Honorable Adam Smith, Ranking Member, House Committee on Armed Services

Endorsing Organizations:

Blue Star Families
Military Family Advisory Network
National Military Family Association
National Military Spouse Network