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**Licensure Legislation enables Military Members and Spouses to Gain Sustainable Jobs Faster**

**EDWARDSVILLE, IL., August 27, 2019** – Southwestern Illinois legislators rallied statewide to unanimously pass HB 1652 enabling expedited license reciprocity for active duty military servicemembers, to include members of the U.S. Coast Guard, Guardsmen, Reservists, and military spouses. This legislation was led by Illinois Rep. LaToya Greenwood, Rep. Jay Hoffman, Rep. Tony McCombie, Rep. Katie Stuart, Rep. Debbie Meyers-Martin, Rep. Mary Edly-Allen, Rep. Michael Halpin, Rep. Kelly Burke, Sen. Christopher Belt, Sen. Neil Anderson, Sen. Paul Schimpf, Sen. Rachelle Crowe, and Sen. Cristina Castro.

Illinois Governor J. B. Pritzker signed the bill (now public act 101-0240) on Friday, August 9, 2019. This bill impacts approximately 110 professional licenses administered by the Illinois Department of Finance and Professional Regulation (IDFPR).

This enhanced IDFPR process has been viewed nationally as an achievement envied by multiple other states. The legislation helps military members and spouses serving at Illinois bases to obtain reciprocity for their professional licenses to start work faster in Illinois. An IDFPR Military Liaison will aid these professionals to move applications through the process in a more efficient and effective manner. IDFPR will provide an annual report that tracks the status of all military related applications to ensure no one gets lost in the licensure process.

“In today’s two household income families, it is critical for military members and spouses to be able to expedite the transfer of their professional licenses to gain employment, because it often takes upwards of 24 months for military spouses to find work.<sup>1</sup> Considering many spouses are only at a military base for 2-3 years, difficulty in gaining sustainable employment for spouses has been a significant reason why many military members leave the service early,” said Mike Riley, Chairman, Leadership Council Public Policy Committee.

Overall, Illinois has approximately 40,756 active-duty, reserve, and National Guard service members, and 14,889 spouses residing in Illinois.<sup>2</sup> This bill not only impacts Scott AFB, one of the largest economic engines in Southwestern Illinois, that brings a \$3.5B impact to the region, but also Great Lakes Naval Air Station, Rock Island Army Arsenal, and the Illinois National Guard.

The new law compliments license reciprocity for teachers, which Illinois passed in 2018. Brandy Meyer, a military spouse and local teacher said, “The nation appreciates and supports the military, but sometimes less visible to the public are their husbands, wives, and children, who endure many unique challenges.

“As an educator, I know from experience what it is like having to get re-certified to teach every time my husband moves to a new state,” said Meyer. “What this law does for me and other military spouses is it allows us to transfer our licenses from other states to Illinois. This law removes a road block that can prevent us from working and having our own careers.”

The new law will take effect in January 2020.

“Scott’s servicemembers and their spouses appreciate the passage of spouse license reciprocity in the state of Illinois. Military spouses often sacrifice their own professional success to accompany their husbands and wives as they move from one assignment to the next; sometimes putting their careers on hold or giving up on their professional aspirations altogether. This law recognizes the challenges our military spouses face,” said Col. J. Scot Heathman, Scott Air Force Base installation commander and commander of the 375th Air Mobility Wing.

“By allowing them to expeditiously transfer their current licenses and certificates to Illinois, this law creates an avenue for our military spouses to seek and apply for employment opportunities immediately upon their reassignment to Scott,” said Heathman. “It is a win not only for our military spouses but also for the region’s employers who can capitalize on their talents and skills.”

“We want to thank everyone who worked on this effort with our state legislators to address this important issue for our military families. This law is a testament to Illinois’ commitment to being a military-friendly state. It shows that Illinois cares about its servicemembers and their families. It demonstrates how much the state values its military installations and understands the importance of the bases’ continued success to Illinois and to the nation,” according to Jay Korte, Chairman of the Leadership Council Military Affairs Committee.

#### **References**

1. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Military-Spouses-in-the-Labor-Market.pdf>
2. <https://statepolicy.militaryonesource.mil/state/IL>

*The Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois is a member-based, economic development corporation representing Southwestern Illinois. The Council works to unite business, industry, government, education and labor for economic growth in Southwestern Illinois. These effective partnerships serve as a driving force behind successful economic development efforts throughout the region.*