



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000
DEC 2 2011

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
CHIEF, NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU

SUBJECT: Update on "USA 4 Military Families" Initiative

This memorandum provides an update on our progress in informing Governors and other state officials of the DoD 10 Key Personnel and Readiness Issues Supporting Service members and their Families (issues for 2012 attached). During their 2011 legislative sessions, the states approved passage of 88 bills supporting the seven issues that have current legislative solutions.

Notably, an additional 4 states adopted the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, bringing the total to 39 states covering 89% of the children in active duty military families living the U.S. In addition, 25 states modified their voting laws to better support Service members and their families, 14 states enacted legislation to protect the rights of Service members with regard to child custody, 10 states modified their laws to alleviate some of the licensure barriers experienced by military spouses, and 6 states provided opportunities for separating Service members to obtain credit for their military education, training and experience towards achieving occupational licenses and academic degrees.

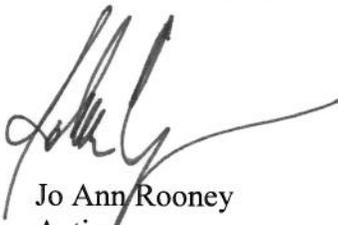
In May 2011, we requested input from your staffs to ensure we continue addressing the most significant quality of life issues that are a state-level responsibility. As a result, we have revised the list of 10 Key Issues by:

- Adding the authorization of Veterans Treatment Courts as a potential method for reducing suicides and assisting returning veterans and Service members suffering from mental disorders.
- Dropping the issue that advocated a list of potential best practices in support of Guard and Reserve members and families, since the current list of 10 Key Issues impacts the Reserve Component as well as the active force.
- Dropping the support of strategic foreign languages in order to concentrate on building public-private partnerships at state level that can more efficiently deliver support to Service members and their families regardless of Service or Component.

In working with state governments, we have found that state officials look to commanders and other Service members to validate the importance of our issues. Providing such information to state legislators at their request is generally legally permissible, provided it is done through official channels. In this regard, although 18 U.S.C. Section 1913 states DoD may not use appropriated funds for lobbying, it does not necessarily prevent DoD employees or military members from communicating factual information to state legislators providing

background on or discussing the views of DoD with respect to relevant state legislation, provided the public is not urged to contact government officials.

I hope you share the 10 key issues with your senior commanders and encourage them to work with the DoD-State Liaison Office on issues within their states. Mr. Ed Kringer, (703) 602-4949-114, ed.kringer@osd.mil, can provide further information to your staff. In addition, more detailed information on best practices and updates on our progress are available at www.usa4militaryfamilies.org.



Jo Ann Rooney
Acting

Attachment:
As stated

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Key Personnel and Readiness Issues Supporting Service Members and Families (For 2012)



- 1. Facilitate Service Members Receiving Licensure and Academic Credit for Military Education, Training and Experience:** By not receiving credit, separating Service members may be held back from finding employment or finishing a degree. States can establish policies that ensure separating Service members do not have to repeat requirements completed during their military career to obtain academic credit or an occupational license.
- 2. Facilitate Military Spouse Transition through Licensure Portability and Eligibility for Unemployment Compensation:** Mandatory military moves require spouses to leave employment and start again in a state with new licensing requirements. States can help by expediting licensing through endorsement, temporary licensure and streamlined processes. States should also recognize that these mandatory job separations should afford military spouses eligibility for unemployment compensation.
- 3. Minimize School Disruption for Military Children During Transition and Deployment:** Military life creates challenges for children who attend an average of 8 schools in 12 years, plus parental separation during deployments. States can help by participating in the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children which establishes common guidelines for handling class and course placement, records transfer, immunizations, graduation, and extra-curricular opportunities.
- 4. Increase Access to Quality, Affordable Childcare for Military Families:** Demand for child care continues to outpace capacity. The desired outcome is that states integrate DoD standards into their Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) for child care programs. Through statewide QRISs, DoD can identify providers eligible for "approved" status (subsidized care) and partner with other providers to help them reach that status.
- 5. Ensure Deployment Separation Does Not Determine Child Custody Decisions:** Extended separations due to military service necessarily alter short-term custody/visitation arrangements and can have long-term consequences. States can appropriately balance the interests of service members while preserving the best interests of the child, address delegation of visitation rights, and expedite court dockets and use electronic communications to accommodate military demands.
- 6. Improve Absentee Voting for Military Members and Their Families:** Citizens need assurance their vote will be counted. States can approve the Uniform Military and Overseas Voter Act (UMOVA) which supports the flexible processes for absentee voters in the areas recommended by the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) Office.
- 7. Provide Authority for Establishing Veteran Treatment Courts (VTCs):** One in five veterans suffers from Acute Stress Disorder (ASD), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), substance abuse, or other behavioral health problems. These problems can result in homelessness, family stress and/or disintegration, and instances of criminal behavior. States can help by authorizing VTCs to provide opportunities for rehabilitation (instead of incarceration) for veterans and service members experiencing behavioral health problems.
- 8. Promote Consumer Protections and Enforcement of the Predatory Lending Regulation:** Military consumers are vulnerable to unscrupulous practices. Additionally, some lending practices create a cycle of debt, thus detracting from financial wellbeing and military readiness. States can help by working with the military community on consumer concerns and by fully enforcing the DoD Regulation on payday, vehicle title, and refund anticipation loans.
- 9. Comport State Laws with DoD Rules on Disposition:** Many states require disposition of remains be determined through state-specific documentation or by a priority sequence of next of kin. States can alleviate potential family disharmony during a time of bereavement by recognizing the person authorized to direct disposition (PADD) selected by the service member on DD Form 93 (Record of Emergency Data), in accordance with Federal law.
- 10. Coordinate State-wide Public-Private Support for Service Members and Their Families:** Some issues require a comprehensive approach, best facilitated by state governments. Efficiently supporting military families requires coordination. States can mobilize resources, and create committees that can facilitate state-wide coordination and long range planning.

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www.USA4MilitaryFamilies.org