



## Key Message

To supplement employment protections under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, states can add military family status as a class protected in state education, housing, public utilities and civil rights laws.

## Discussion Points

The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness prioritizes defending the nation, taking care of our people and succeeding through teamwork. People are at the core, and the secretary has established a corresponding goal to ensure service members and families are protected through state-implemented, anti-discrimination measures in such matters as employment, housing, education, public utilities and civil rights laws.

1. In various surveys, military spouses and dependents have reported negative experiences because of their service member's military affiliation. Examples of military discrimination can include:
  - Denying employment to a job applicant because they are a military spouse
  - Refusing to provide accommodations for service members and veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder and military family members who may have sought mental health services
  - Charging service members or their families higher security deposits for rental properties as a condition of getting a lease
  - Requiring that service members or their families waive federal housing protections from the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act as a condition of getting a lease
  - Refusing to rent to members of the reserve and Guard component out of concern that the tenant will be deployed
2. States can add military family status as a class protected in state employment, education, housing, public utilities and civil rights laws, and take actions to supplement the employment protections under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. This fits into the broader mission to support military families and is a high priority for the Defense Department to help ensure resiliency and retention for active-duty service members.
3. The Defense-State Liaison Office will track and/or seek the introduction of state legislation to amend discrimination statutes to include military status as a protected class, and when requested, offer testimony and participate in legislative hearings to highlight the importance of amending discrimination provisions to help protect military families.



According to the 2021 Active Duty Spouse Survey, 64% of military spouses were in the civilian labor force, meaning they were either employed or unemployed and actively seeking work. And the spouses who were unemployed had been looking for work for an average of 19 weeks.