



Key Message

To supplement federal protections for service members, states can add military family status as a class protected in state education, employment, housing and other civil rights laws.

Discussion Points

1. Service members and their families are the bedrock of our military readiness and national security. They and their families make substantial sacrifices in terms of time, physical safety and geographical stability.
2. The Defense Department recognizes the need to maximize the well-being and safety of the force.
3. The DOD has prioritized the well-being of military families by focusing on changing the culture and reducing discrimination against them.
4. States can play a role in caring for our service members and their families by amending discrimination statutes to protect military family status.
5. Specific areas in which states can protect military families against bias and discrimination include:
 - **Education** – Making sure military-connected students, particularly those with special needs, have equal opportunity
 - **Employment** – Ensuring that a military spouse isn't denied employment just because they are a military spouse
 - **Housing** – Preventing property owners from charging service members and their families higher security deposits for rental properties or requiring the waiver of federal housing protections as conditions for getting a lease
 - **Public accommodations** – Prohibiting the denial of service to military members in a restaurant, hotel, theater, retail store, etc.



While service members are legally protected in some ways (e.g., housing and employment), their spouses and children may be less protected, particularly in the areas of education and employment. Protected class status may alleviate difficulties, or at least increase service members' perception of security, when facing military-related challenges, particularly during a PCS.