



## Key Message

Military spouses in the civilian workforce have a 20% unemployment rate, which adversely impacts military family economic security. States can assist in bolstering military families by enacting state laws that permit state and local governments and private industries to offer hiring and procurement preferences for military spouses. These efforts recognize the need to combat military spouse unemployment rates and support the financial well-being of military families.

## Discussion Points

1. Employment stability directly impacts military readiness. Service members whose families have secure employment can focus entirely on mission execution without financial distractions. Financial stress from spouses being underemployed or unemployed affects the mission readiness and focus of both the service member and their family, and critically impacts retention rates.
2. Active-duty military spouses represent a highly skilled workforce yet face unemployment rates five times the national average, largely due to frequent relocations that disrupt career continuity. The stress and financial burden of these spouses being underemployed or unemployed drives military families to leave the service, resulting in a loss of critical talent.
3. States can adopt policies allowing private employers to offer hiring preferences to military spouses, similar to existing preferences for veterans. This removes barriers and encourages private employers who want to support the economic stability of military families.
4. States can also adopt policies that allow state and local governments to apply hiring preferences for military spouses, similar to those already in place for veterans. This option recognizes the unique qualifications military spouses offer and addresses employment gaps that force military families to choose between service and financial stability.
5. Military spouse entrepreneurs create jobs and economic growth in their local communities despite frequent moves. States can support this talent pool by offering procurement preferences to military spouse-owned businesses similar to existing set-asides for veteran-owned small businesses.



Military spouses bring exceptional qualifications to the workforce. They are highly educated, adaptable professionals who have mastered complex relocations and diverse work environments. The average military spouse is 33 years old with significant professional experience, representing prime working-age talent that states can capture through strategic economic policies.