

Key Message

When service members receive mobilization orders for stateside missions, deployment orders for overseas missions or require long-term care for combat injuries, their families face challenges that civilian leave policies might not address. States can ensure equitable access to family leave benefits for eligible relatives of military service members who must activate, deploy or train away from home for extended periods by revising policies to cover the full range of qualifying assignments and activation types.

Discussion Points

1. Military families face unique circumstances that civilian leave laws do not address, such as deployment preparations, unexpected homecomings, predeployment briefings and wounded warrior care. When military spouses cannot take time off for these critical events, service members must choose between family stability and mission focus, directly undermining operational effectiveness.
2. Family leave programs cover basic family needs, but lack military-specific provisions – creating gaps when families need support during deployments, training cycles or emergency returns. Military exigency clauses in state family leave laws fill these operational gaps that only affect military families.
3. States with comprehensive family leave programs can include military exigency provisions beyond the federal Family and Medical Leave Act that cover deployment preparation, childcare arrangements, legal document completion and reintegration support. This approach recognizes that military service creates distinct family challenges requiring targeted solutions.
4. When military spouses can address deployment logistics without losing income or job security, service members deploy with confidence that their families are prepared and supported. This eliminates distractions that can compromise mission safety and unit effectiveness in high-stakes environments.
5. Both mandatory state programs and voluntary private insurance systems can incorporate military exigency language, ensuring coverage regardless of a state's approach to family leave. This flexibility allows states to support military families within their existing policy frameworks.
6. Most supplemental state programs are financed solely by worker contributions through payroll deductions.
7. Expanding eligibility often does not impact the state's general fund. Instead, it adjusts a continuously appropriated, worker-funded pool.
8. Even in higher-use scenarios, projected costs typically represent a very small share of total paid leave program funds. This suggests that expanding eligibility to include military exigency provisions is unlikely to affect the program's overall stability.



States that incorporate military exigency provisions into their family leave laws demonstrate a proactive commitment to military readiness and family resilience. These provisions allow military spouses and caregivers to take job-protected, often paid, leave for deployment-related needs – such as arranging childcare, attending predeployment briefings or managing reintegration after return.