



Key Message

Military spouses in the civilian workforce have a 20% unemployment rate, which adversely impacts military family economic security. States can support military families by enacting state laws that permit state and local governments and private industry to offer hiring and procurement preferences for military spouses.

Discussion Points

1. Employment stability is a cornerstone of military readiness. When families are financially secure, service members can maintain an undivided focus on mission execution. In contrast, spouse underemployment creates financial stress that reduces readiness and significantly lowers retention rates.
2. Despite being highly skilled, active-duty military spouses face an unemployment rate five times the national average. Frequent relocations disrupt career continuity, creating financial strains that directly undermine force retention and result in a significant loss of experienced talent.
3. Just as veteran preferences exist to honor those who have served, extending these statutory frameworks to military spouses serves as a direct recognition of a military family's service and sacrifice to our nation. The operational readiness of the total force depends on the economic stability of these families, who frequently endure career disruptions due to military orders. To acknowledge their service and eliminate systemic employment barriers, states should:
 - Enact legislation authorizing private employers to implement military spouse hiring preferences, mirroring the successful model used for veterans. This framework removes critical obstacles and empowers the private sector to directly support the economic stability of the total force.
 - Enact legislation authorizing state and local government hiring preferences for military spouses, establishing alignment with veteran preference statutes. This framework addresses the systemic employment gaps that force military families to choose between their financial stability and continued service
 - Enact legislation that includes military spouse-owned businesses in state procurement preference programs. Aligning these with existing set-asides for veteran-owned businesses reduces the economic disruptions of military life and encourages entrepreneurs who contribute to the state's economy while supporting the mission.



Military spouses bring exceptional qualifications to the workforce. They are highly educated, adaptable professionals who have mastered complex relocations and diverse work environments. Military spouses who have significant professional experience represent prime working-age talent that states can capture through strategic economic policies.