

MILITARY SPOUSES BILL

sails through legislature

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Military families relocate frequently. Facilitating military spouses in continuing their work in a new place of residence without delays or extra expenses is very important. Spouses in professionally licensed fields such as medical, engineering, education, accounting, or the cosmetic arts face challenges due to delays or cost of transferring licenses to a new state or jurisdiction. Many of these impacted spouses carry and maintain licenses from multiple states, sometimes up to as many as seven or eight. Eliminating these barriers will improve the quality of life for military families and ease the stress of transferring duty stations while increasing the retention in the Air Force of our highly trained and valued military members. Retention is of great concern to the Air Force, made more so in these times of low unemployment when opportunities abound with the commercial airlines for highly trained pilots and aircraft maintainers.

Ellsworth Air Force Base has a \$360+ million direct economic impact on South Dakota. It is one

of the largest employers in the State with approximately 3,500 active duty and nearly 1,000 civilian personnel. These numbers are all anticipated to increase significantly with the arrival of the B-21 Bomber. The Air Force has factored quality of life issues, like military spouse licensure, into their base decision-making criteria. This would calculate into the decisions regarding new mission placement, such as the new B-21 Bomber, as well as any future Base Realignment and Closure, or BRAC, decision.

On March 21, 2019, Governor Kristi Noem signed South Dakota House Bill 1111 into law. This bill eliminated the professional and occupational licensure requirements and associated fees for military spouses relocating to South Dakota. The Air Force had asked South Dakota, and all States, for help with this issue. The bill received wide support from across the State, but was carried through the legislature by Rep. Mike Deidrich, Sen. Jeff Partridge, and Sen. Alan Solano with advocacy from the Rapid City Area Chamber of Commerce, the Ellsworth Development Authority, and the Governor's office. It became effective July 1, 2019.

Former Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson stated



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that the Air Force prefers to do business with States that are willing to work with them and assist them in completing their mission. By passing this important legislation unanimously, 66-0 in the House and 35-0 in the Senate, South Dakota has shown it is willing to do what it takes to support the Air Force. House Bill 1111 is one step that can make the sacrifices and challenges facing military families easier to handle. Whether

retiring here or staying for just a few years, South Dakota and the Black Hills welcomes all military families and appreciates all the sacrifices you have made for the country.

Scott Landguth is the Executive Director of the South Dakota Ellsworth Development Authority. The Authority's mission is to ensure that South Dakota and the Black Hills are a great place for the Air Force to conduct its mission.