



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie 'Career Portability' Bill for Military Spouses Gets Senate Ok

PATTY RITCHIE May 27, 2015

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NY is Only State Without a Law that Protects Careers of Soldiers' Families

The State Senate today approved a bill, sponsored by Senator Patty Ritchie, to make it easier for spouses of active duty military to get approval to work in their chosen fields that require licensing or certification by the state.

“Right now, hundreds, if not thousands of military spouses at Fort Drum and other posts around New York are prohibited from working in jobs for which they are well-trained, even though they have valid licenses in their home states,” said Senator Ritchie.

“That’s because New York—alone among every other state—requires these professionals to undergo the same training, testing and certification process as if they were seeking a license for the very first time.

“That puts strain on marriages, causes financial hardships for military families—more than half of whom rely on two incomes to make ends meet—and even affects America’s military preparedness, because a spouse’s limited career options are an important consideration for soldiers who are deciding if they will leave the military,” said Senator Ritchie.

Forty-nine other states have created systems of expedited or temporary professional licensing for military spouses who are already approved by their home states to practice, according to the Military Officers Association. In New York, the issue affects 120 professions—from doctors to barbers, real estate agents to truck drivers, architects to massage therapists, among others.

Senator Ritchie’s bill, S.2947, would make it easier for military spouses to gain approval from the state if they can show they hold a valid license from their home state and already meet New York’s training requirements.

Military spouses are 10 times more likely than other civilians to move across state lines during their careers. And retraining and reapplying for a New York license adds long delays and can cost thousands of dollars, according to case studies.

The issue is especially critical in communities surrounding Fort Drum. Home to 38,000 soldiers and family members, the post is among the nation’s busiest military posts, with thousands of troops and families cycling through from other states annually.

That’s why career portability was a major concern of the post’s previous Commanding General, Major General Stephen Townsend, who raised the issue in meetings with legislative leaders during this year’s annual Fort Drum Day at the Capitol.

“This legislation is a major win for military spouses, for our region’s economy, and for our nation’s security overall,” added Senator Ritchie. “This legislation would help add to our military preparedness, because it provides an incentive for the most highly trained soldiers to continue to serve our country.”

Studies show that 53 percent of military families are dual-income, with the lack of professional license portability coming at a significant cost in terms of delayed career advancement, lost opportunity, and income, as military spouses have been found to earn 25 percent less than their civilian

counterparts, largely because of frequent moves.

The bill was sent to the Assembly, where it is sponsored by US Army veteran, Assemblyman Felix Ortiz.