



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie Bill to Clear Employment Hurdle for Military Spouses Signed Into Law

PATTY RITCHIE September 9, 2016



State Senator Patty Ritchie has announced her legislation to clear the way for spouses of soldiers at Fort Drum and New York's other military installations to find employment in professional fields that require a state license has been signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo.

The measure (S.2947-A) makes it easier for military spouses to transfer certain professional licenses from other states, in fields ranging from acupuncture to social work, engineering to

nursing, interior design to pharmacy, among more than 40 others. Up until now, New York was the only state in the nation that didn't give special consideration for licensed professionals forced to move to be near their spouse who was serving at a military installation in the state.

"Military families move 10 times more often than others—often crossing state lines that have different rules and protocols for professional licenses—and this makes it more difficult for military spouses to find work to help support their families," said Senator Ritchie.

"In recent years, top leaders at Fort Drum and Defense Department officials shared with me the importance of getting this measure passed, which they view as a key tool to encourage trained and experienced military service members to reenlist. Members of our military and their families sacrifice so much, and this is truly a way to make things easier for them by creating more—and better—opportunities so they succeed in the new communities where they are assigned, and I would like to thank the Governor for recognizing the importance of this measure."

Fort Drum brass and Department of Defense officials, who advocated in recent years for passage of the measure, are applauding signing of Senator Ritchie's bill.

"It is great to see New York State demonstrate this level of support to our Soldiers and their families," said Major General Jeffrey Bannister, Senior Commander, 10th Mountain Division & Fort Drum. "The ability for our spouses to find employment that matches their level of experience and expertise is a critical element of financial security for military families. Additionally it helps ensure employers are able to hire from our well-qualified pool of military family members."

“I speak on behalf of all our military families when I say thank you to the Governor's office, Senator Ritchie and our other state legislators, and our local community leadership for supporting and pushing this legislation through and into law today,” General Bannister added. “This is just one of hundreds of examples of support that make the North Country and New York State such a great place to serve.”

“The Department of Defense appreciates the action of Governor Cuomo and the New York State Legislature in supporting this policy reform that unites New York with 49 other states in removing barriers to employment for military spouses,” stated the Department of Defense. “The Department also wishes to thank the many organizations and concerned individuals who have shown their support for our military spouses, and worked tirelessly to ensure passage of this key legislation.”

Under Senator Ritchie's measure, the application process for military spouses who hold professional licenses in a different state will be expedited and spouses will be allowed to work up to six months while their applications are being reviewed. The new law also reduces by half any licensing fees for military spouses. State officials will still review their training and work history to ensure that they meet New York's own standards for the jobs they are seeking.