

Duckworth, Murkowski, Colleagues Introduce Bipartisan Bill To Support Military And Foreign Services Spouses And Families, Create Job Flexibility

December 20 2023 9:44 AM



WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Jerry Moran (R-KS) and Jacky Rosen (D-NV) today introduced bipartisan

legislation to support military and foreign service spouses and their families by creating more job flexibility when a servicemember is deployed or transferred. The *READINESS Act*, which was developed by current and former federally employed military spouses, aims to encourage the retainment of military spouses across the federal government and lower high employee turnover. U.S. Representatives Don Bacon (R-NE-02) and Jasmine Crockett (D-TX-30) introduced the [House version](#) of the bill in November.

“When the brave members of our military and Foreign Service are relocated or transferred to a new duty station, we should be doing everything we can to support their families who sacrifice so much to go with them—including sometimes having to leave their jobs,” said Duckworth. “I’m proud to join Senator Murkowski to introduce this bipartisan legislation to ensure we provide our military and Foreign Service spouses with the flexibility and job support they need as their families make these transitions, reducing unemployment and strengthening military readiness.”

“Military spouses are critical support systems in their families—and I’m proud to lead the bipartisan *READINESS Act* to provide job and career support to them when their spouse faces deployment or transfer,” said Murkowski. “This legislation creates flexibilities that already exist in the federal government, and can help to retain quality workers while also ensuring that the spouses of servicemembers can support their families. Our military spouses do so much for our country—and we should do what we can to make their service better.”

Currently, military spouse unemployment has held over 20 percent for over 30 years and is 6 times the national unemployment rate. More than one-third of military families cite spouse employment challenges as a reason for leaving active duty.

Military and foreign service moves are involuntary, a consideration unique to this small group of federal employees. The lack of agency flexibility often results in spouses being forced to resign under threat of termination. The dearth of available jobs around many military bases then results in career breaks or voluntary demotions, negatively impacting the military family’s financial health.

The *READINESS Act* would incentivize military service members to accept hardship orders or orders to locations with a negative availability of civilian jobs. Additionally, it would create a decision tree when an employee presents their supervisor with military or foreign service orders including whether the employee’s position can be performed remotely; if they can transfer to an agency position within the commuting area of the new location; or if they can transfer to an agency position that can be performed remotely. If not, it would place them in a non-pay status (i.e., Leave Without Pay) for the greater of their spouse’s orders or 36 months – with the employing agency able to backfill the position, unencumbered.

