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Local Legislators Support Military Families

Senator Pearce with Reps. Largent and Hoskins Lead Bill Through Legislature; Governor Signs HB 1524 Before Memorial Day

JEFFERSON CITY—On the last day of the legislative session (5/14), the Missouri Senate and House agreed on final passage of an omnibus military family support law that includes several provisions to help Missouri military families and retirees. In anticipation of the upcoming Memorial Day holiday, today the governor signed the bill into law.

[House Bill 1524](#), sponsored by Reps. Scott Largent (R-Clinton) and Denny Hoskins (R-Warrensburg) and handled by Sen. David Pearce (R-Warrensburg) in the Senate, had overwhelming support. It passed by a vote of 147–0 in the House and 34–0 in the Senate. It is hoped that the new law will help military personnel, retirees and their families deal with issues that impact them as a result of their duty.

Some of the key provisions in the bill include:

- Streamlining of absentee voting and registration for Missouri military personnel serving away from home.
- Allowing an exemption for the A+ Schools Program’s three-year attendance requirement for retired military dependents who move to Missouri within one year of retirement.
- Clarifying “next of kin” designations as it relates to final disposition of remains and the Uniform Code of Military Justice.
- Allowing the Adjutant General to establish the Missouri Youth Challenge Academy for at-risk high school students. The residential military-based academy will provide work experience and training in life skills, citizenship, life-coping and academic skills, and other personal development skills.
- Authorizing the governor to present certain citations and ribbons, including a Legion of Merit Medal, to individuals who have exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding military service and achievement reflecting honorably and creditably upon the state.

Senator Pearce continued his success of negotiating bills through the Legislature that help Missouri military families and retirees. In addition to the omnibus bill, Sen. Pearce achieved passage of a bill to protect earned scholarships for certain students ([SB 733](#)). Under the bill, if a recipient of a Missouri Bright Flight Scholarship cannot attend an approved institution because of military service with the United States Armed Forces, the student will still receive the scholarship if he or she returns to full-time status within six months after completing military service.

“Sometimes our laws are originally written without knowing the impact they may have on every group of Missouri citizens,” Sen. Pearce said. “So we have to look for opportunities to make sure that those who serve our country in the military are treated fairly.”

Representative Largent, whose district includes many military families and retirees from Whiteman Air Force Base said, “Military families are such an important part of our communities and we need to address issues that will help them during their service to our country. I’m proud to have sponsored this bill and it’s great to see the widespread support we’ve had for it.”

The Whiteman Area Leadership Council (WALC), founded in 2004 to address concerns from the Base Realignment and Closure process, is very supportive of these legislative efforts in Missouri. WALC Chair Weldon Brady said, “We are proud of our legislators across the state for their overwhelming support of these laws. We must continuously look for ways to improve our state as a place where the military wants to do business and their people want to live.”

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