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**SENATE BILL 5772**

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**State of Washington**

**66th Legislature**

**2019 Regular Session**

**By** Senators O'Ban and Conway

Read first time 01/31/19. Referred to Committee on State Government,  
Tribal Relations & Elections.

1 AN ACT Relating to increasing employment opportunities for  
2 spouses of military members; adding a new section to chapter 73.16  
3 RCW; adding new sections to chapter 43.41 RCW; and creating a new  
4 section.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature makes the following  
7 findings:

8 (a) Spouses of military members make great sacrifices in  
9 supporting the mission and service of their husbands and wives,  
10 including leaving jobs and careers to accompany their spouses on  
11 reassignment to a different state or overseas. Such sacrifices become  
12 harder when resources are not available to help these spouses  
13 transition to other job and career opportunities while living in a  
14 new state or abroad.

15 (b) Multiple studies affirm unequivocally higher unemployment  
16 rates for military spouses than for civilian spouses. Underemployment  
17 is also a serious challenge for military spouses and their families.  
18 The lack of employment opportunities for military spouses create  
19 stress, influence a family's decision to stay in or leave the  
20 military, and is a factor that ultimately hurts military readiness,  
21 retention, and recruiting.

1 (c) Advances in technology and the economy have created more job  
2 prospects for military spouses on reassignment.

3 (2) The legislature intends to establish a military spouse  
4 employment initiative and increase both the hiring and retention of  
5 military spouses in the state workforce by using innovative workplace  
6 strategies, including the use of technology to support mobile  
7 workforce opportunities.

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 73.16  
9 RCW to read as follows:

10 (1) The department of veterans affairs, employment security  
11 department, and department of commerce shall consult local chambers  
12 of commerce, associate development organizations, and businesses to  
13 initiate a demonstration campaign to increase military spouse  
14 employment. This campaign may include partnerships with chambers of  
15 commerce that result in business owners sharing, with the local  
16 chamber of commerce, information on the number of military spouses  
17 employed and the local chambers of commerce providing this  
18 information to the department of veterans affairs.

19 (2) Participants in the campaign are encouraged to work with the  
20 Washington state military transition council and county veterans'  
21 advisory boards as defined in RCW 73.08.035.

22 (3) Funding for the campaign shall be established from existing  
23 resources.

24 (4) For the purposes of this section, "military spouse" means any  
25 person married or previously married to a military service member,  
26 irrespective of the length of the marriage, during the military  
27 service member's service in any branch of the United States armed  
28 forces as an active duty service member, reservist, or national guard  
29 member.

30 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 43.41  
31 RCW to read as follows:

32 (1) The office shall develop a military spouse recruitment  
33 program that targets military spouses and gives them credit for their  
34 knowledge, skills, and leadership abilities. In developing the  
35 program, the office shall consult with the department of enterprise  
36 services, department of veteran affairs, the state military  
37 transition council, the veterans employee resource group, the  
38 employment security department, and other interested stakeholders.

1 Program development must include, but is not limited to, identifying:  
2 (a) Public and private military spouse recruitment programs and ways  
3 those programs can be used in Washington; (b) barriers to state  
4 employment and opportunities to better utilize military spouses'  
5 experience; (c) opportunities within Washington state government  
6 employment for mobile work, telework, and other flexible work  
7 arrangements; and (d) the number of military spouses employed by the  
8 state of Washington.

9 (2) For the purposes of this section, "military spouse" has the  
10 same meaning as in section 2(4) of this act.

11 (3) Funding for the program must be established from existing  
12 resources.

13 (4) The office shall report to the legislature with a draft plan  
14 by January 1, 2020, that includes draft bill language if necessary.

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 43.41  
16 RCW to read as follows:

17 (1) By January 31st of each year, state agencies employing one  
18 thousand or more people must submit the report described in  
19 subsection (2) of this section to the human resources director.

20 (2) The report must include the following information:

21 (a) The number of employees from the previous calendar year;

22 (b) The number of employees who are military spouses, as defined  
23 in section 2(4) of this act; and

24 (c) Employment opportunities within the agency that can be  
25 performed by agency staff who are physically located overseas or  
26 outside the state of Washington.

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