

Massachusetts Gov. Baker joins military families, legislators to celebrate signing of SPEED Act

"The Baker-Polito Administration today joined military family members and legislators for a ceremonial signing of the SPEED Act, a comprehensive new law that makes Massachusetts a more welcoming place for military families and strengthens efforts to support and honor the Commonwealth's veterans. Governor Charlie Baker held a ceremonial signing of the legislation today at Hanscom Air Force Base with Secretary of Veterans' Services Cheryl Lussier Poppe, Massachusetts National Guard Adjunct General Major General Gary W. Keefe, and leaders from the military family community.

"Massachusetts has a strong history of supporting our nation's military, and we are proud that thousands of servicemembers and their families call the Commonwealth their home," said Governor Charlie Baker. "The SPEED Act makes Massachusetts a more welcoming place for military families transferring here by streamlining the occupational licensing process so military spouses can continue their professional careers and by making it easier for those families to access educational opportunities in the Commonwealth. In addition, I am pleased that this new law will create a Medal of Fidelity so that Massachusetts can recognize fallen heroes who lost their lives to the hidden wounds of war. We are grateful to the many military family members who supported this important proposal and to our legislative colleagues for passing this bill."

"Military families sacrifice so much for our country, and it's important we do all we can to make their transitions as seamless as possible," said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito. "We are

glad that the SPEED Act will help military spouses continue their professional careers and military family members access educational opportunities here in the Commonwealth. We are grateful for the partnership of our legislative colleagues on this important issue.”

The SPEED Act streamlines the processes for occupational licensure and school enrollment for military families transferring to Massachusetts, so families can continue their careers and education when a servicemember is newly stationed in the Commonwealth. Governor Baker initially proposed legislation to improve the licensing process for military families last year. The SPEED Act also includes language first proposed by Governor Baker creating a new Medal of Fidelity to honor veterans who lost their lives due to service-related injuries or illnesses. The Military Spouse Licensure Portability, Education and Enrollment of Dependents (SPEED) Act was passed by the Legislature this summer and signed by Governor Baker on August 5, 2022.

“The SPEED Act is momentous legislation that will improve the lives of every single service member, Veteran, and military family member who resides in our Commonwealth, now and in the future,” said Senator John Velis (D – Westfield), Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs. “This new law supports our military families in their transition to Massachusetts, introduces new benefits and services for Veterans and National Guard members, and expands the ways our Commonwealth recognizes the sacrifices of those who have served. I am grateful to Governor Baker for signing this bill into law, to my colleagues in the Legislature for their support, and to all our Commonwealth’s service members and military families for their advocacy and their service.”

“The SPEED Act recognizes our veterans most immediate issues and addresses them head on to provide the highest quality of life,” said Representative Paul McMurtry (D – Dedham), House Chair of the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs.

"Veteran-related issues have been a top priority from the start of this session and along with Governor Baker, Lt. Governor Polito and their administration, we have worked collaboratively to continue the Commonwealth's long history of recognizing deserving veterans and their families."

"This is a historic bill and is most likely the most encompassing military and veterans bill passed in the Commonwealth in the last century," said Major General Gary W. Keefe, Adjunct General of the Massachusetts National Guard. "This bill recognizes both the sacrifice of our military service members, as well as veterans and their families, and it establishes programs that will recruit and retain service members, attract future military missions, and continue to provide for our growing veteran population. Our thanks to Governor Baker, all the Massachusetts legislators in the House and the Senate, as well as the tenacity and leadership of the Joint Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs who worked tirelessly to get this bill over the goal line. This bill will make it clear to every state in the republic that Massachusetts is unmatched in its care and support of its military members, veterans, and their families."

"The SPEED Act provides critical resources that our veterans, service members and their families so rightfully deserve," said Secretary of Veterans' Services Cheryl Lussier Poppe. "Through this legislation, Massachusetts continues to lead the way in providing an array of services and benefits to ensure that veterans and family members can thrive. I am grateful to Governor Baker, Lt. Governor Polito, members of the Legislature and other key stakeholders who helped make this legislation possible."

"The Army recruits Soldiers, but retains Military Families; the other Services do the same. I see the Massachusetts SPEED Act as a big step forward in alleviating several challenges facing Military Families," said Maria McConville, Registered Dietitian, Army Veteran, and Military Spouse. "As an Army

Spouse of 35 years, in a profession requiring state licensing, I am excited to see the Act's focus on portability of licensure for all professions and expedited licensure for teachers. Valuing Military Children through the Purple Star school designations, In-state tuition, and simplification of school enrollment, speaks volumes of Massachusetts' commitment to Service Members and their Families. On behalf of Military Spouses, I am grateful for this legislation and encourage Massachusetts, along with other states, to continue advocating for and supporting their Military residents."

SPEED ACT Major Components:

Expedited Licensing: The SPEED Act creates a new 30-day expedited licensing process for military spouses to receive licenses issued by the Division of Occupational Licensure (DOL) and the Department of Public Health (DPH) if they are licensed in another state and meet necessary requirements. The law also allows for granting of automatic 3-year teaching certificates for spouses of active-duty military members serving in Massachusetts or a bordering state if they are licensed in another state, enabling them to work before completing testing requirements for the regular certificate.

Medal of Fidelity: The SPEED Act includes legislation first filed by Governor Baker in 2020 and again in 2021 to create a Medal of Fidelity to be awarded to the next-of-kin of Massachusetts service members who died as the result of service-connected diseases, conditions, or injuries, including PTSD, traumatic brain injury, or exposure to harmful toxins.

Educational Access for Military Families: The SPEED Act helps military families transferring to Massachusetts by allowing them to enroll students in K-12 school in advance and without having to physically appear. The law also extends Massachusetts residency or "in-state" status at public colleges and universities to any active-duty US military member, spouse, or child who is stationed in the Commonwealth.

Other Measures: The SPEED Act also:

- Creates a new \$2,000 tax credit for businesses with less than 100 employees who hire and retain National Guard members;
- Allows several public colleges and universities to establish a pilot mentoring program to assist non-enrolled veterans to adjust to civilian life; and
- Codifies existing practice by requiring the Governor annually to issue proclamations on the anniversaries of the founding of the US Army, the US Air Force, the US Coast Guard and the National Guard.”