

# MESSAGE FROM MARSHA

## UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS FOR SPOUSES OF COMBAT SOLDIERS

December 15, 2008

House District 19 has the distinct and unique privilege to be the home of Schriever Air Force Base, Peterson Air Force Base and a portion of Fort Carson Army Post. Thousands of military families of Fountain, Security and Widefield have one or both parents in combat zones this Christmas season, and I would ask that we keep them in our prayers, hearts and offerings. Since Colorado is 10<sup>th</sup> in the nation in her population of military installations it is important that we continue to strive for quality benefits for our military families.

Earlier this year when Representative Stephens and I, sponsored HB1180 we had the honor to meet several surviving spouses of combat soldiers. Women who lost their loved one in combat and were sharing their stories of sacrifice and bravery. Along with their tragic stories of loss they mentioned that Colorado, and in particular Colorado Springs offers many wonderful benefits to family members of fallen soldiers but has fallen short on unemployment benefits for surviving spouses.

Even though HB1180 allows for spouses of active duty military to claim unemployment insurance benefits when they are transferred out of state due to military orders, it ***DID NOT*** cover unemployment benefits for surviving spouses of combat soldiers. We were unaware that benefits for surviving spouses who suffer the loss of a spouse in combat was absent in our law, and it was too late in the session to amend HB1180 and address the unemployment benefits needs of surviving spouses.

During the meeting with these courageous surviving women I was stricken by the unfortunate and tragic loss of a mother of three, whom had worked for years in Colorado, whose husband was killed in combat and was denied unemployment benefits when she moved home(out of state) to raise the children. At times it may be necessary for the surviving spouse to apply for unemployment benefits until she can locate employment and get on her feet. On that day, on the west steps of the capital I committed to help her and others whom had suffered a loss of their loved one in combat and fight for those needed unemployment benefits.

It is an honor to report that I am sponsoring a bill that will assist our home-front victims of war and allow for surviving spouses of combat soldiers whom move out of state to qualify for unemployment benefits. According to Legislative Services, any benefit awarded to the surviving spouses ***WILL NOT*** affect the employer's premium and will have minimal impact on the \$680,000,000 dollar unemployment insurance benefit fund.

I remain committed to working on quality benefits for our military families and our home-front victims of war. If you support or oppose this legislation please email me your comments. They are important and may be used in the testimony phase of the bill. You are invited to visit [GOMARSHA.ORG](http://GOMARSHA.ORG) for additional information regarding all upcoming legislation and offer suggestions and recommendations.

Thank you for the honor and privilege to serve you and your family!

***Marsha Looper***

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