

Message from Marsha

HONORING THE SPOUSES OF OUR MILITARY

This session many of the legislators from the General Assembly have been honoring the courage, heroism, and sacrifices of the men and women of the United States Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Reserves and National Guard. Colorado's security, safety and economy benefit significantly from the presence and military service of more than 60,000 men and women in uniform in our state.

February 13, 2008, was dedicated Colorado Veterans Appreciation Day, by the Colorado Sixty-Sixth General Assembly. We dedicated Veterans Appreciation Day to honor the brave men, women and family members who make the sacrifices to protect our security and promote peace around the world.

While our warriors are defending our country from hostile invaders, terrorists and others who are intent on destroying America, their family members are left to cope with constant moves and relocation at the request of the Armed Services. These unsung heroes of the military ask only one thing of us; ***THAT WE ASSIST THEIR LOVED ONES DURING PERIODS OF LONG DEPLOYMENTS AND TRANSFERS!***

And that is exactly what we intend to do! It is my privilege to sponsor HB1180, a bill that would allow Unemployment Insurance Benefits for a spouse who vacates their employment to accompany their active duty military family member who has been transferred out of state.

Last year, I received a telephone call from Jackie, wife of a Fort Carson soldier who had been transferred to Fort Shafer in Hawaii. For over four years Jackie had worked full time in Colorado and was now unable to find employment in Hawaii. This was the first time she desperately needed assistance to pay for living expenses.

After many hours of research, I found out that Colorado currently does not provide unemployment benefits for spouses who move with their active military spouse. Even though 21 other states offer unemployment insurance benefits to spouses of the active military, Colorado does not! It was heart breaking to report back to Jackie, that Colorado did not have a policy that supports the spouses of active military for these types of transfers!

That was one of my most difficult phone calls that I ever had to make, and hopefully will never have to make again. I committed to Jackie that I would work on changing Colorado law so that military spouses would be allowed some type of unemployment compensation. HB1180 is that solution.

Currently, Colorado's Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund has a balance of \$688 million dollars, expected to increase in 2008-2009 to \$774 million, and increase to \$959 million in 2009-1010. This bill WILL NOT affect any employer's tax rate, unemployment base taxes or the solvency surcharge. The estimated fiscal impact of offering this coverage is less than .0014 of the overall total of the fund. **Please, remember that the employers of these spouses have already paid into the fund. These spouses are not asking for a free hand out, but simply a fair shake!** Please help me and help those in temporary need by supporting HB1180!

If you have any questions or comments about this or any other issue, please contact me at MarshaLooper@gmail.com, or call me at 238-5600. For additional information visit WWW.GOMARSHA.ORG. Thank you for the privilege of serving you!

-Marsha Looper