



READINESS AND FORCE
MANAGEMENT

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

22 January 22, 2015

The Honorable Bill Wielechowski
State Senator
State Capitol, Room 419
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Wielechowski:

On behalf of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Military Community and Family Policy, I want to thank you for your support of Service members in private sector hiring, as evidenced by your sponsorship of Senate Bill 2 (SB2) in the 2015 Alaska legislative session. This new and significant 2015 Department of Defense priority simply allows employers to utilize a veterans hiring preference, without fear of unanticipated discrimination allegations or related legal issues, and imposes no requirement upon private sector employers.

This effort will greatly aid private sector employers hire Service members who move back to Alaska upon completing their military service obligation. It will legally allow them to give hiring preferences to those new veterans and greatly assist in the veteran's transition to civilian life. Because state and local governments already offer this hiring preference, the change would also allow some measure of equity between the private and public sector when competing for veteran talent. If the policy change, as represented in SB2 is successful, Alaska will join 12 other states already providing this help to transitioning veterans.

Last year, according to the Defense Manpower Data Center data, over 2,000 military personnel separated and returned to Alaska and we know that number is likely to rise in the coming year given the continued force shaping efforts. Nationally, as of June 2014, 573,000 veterans were unemployed. The jobless rate for post 9/11 veterans was 6.4%, with young male veterans aged 18-24 enduring an unemployment rate of 12.4%; these percentages exceed civilian counterpart rates. If enacted, this measure certainly has the potential to have a significant positive impact.

We greatly appreciate that the Alaska legislature has been a champion in addressing our key military family quality of life issues for the past eight years. We intend to provide as much information and support as possible as your policy recommendation (currently contained in SB2) moves forward in upcoming hearings before the Senate Labor & Commerce and State Affairs Committees and on the Senate Floor.

As always, Mark San Souci, our Northwest Regional Liaison, stands ready to support where he can. If you have questions or need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at 571.372.5321 or Mark at 571.309.4622, mark.b.sansouci.civ@mail.mil.

Sincerely,

Thomas L. Langdon, Ed.D.
Director, State Liaison & Educational Opportunity
(Military Community and Family Policy)