

Military Parental Leave Modernization Act

Background:

Our Nation's military parental leave policies and statutes currently provide married male Servicemembers with up to 10 days of paternity leave after the birth of a new child, female Servicemembers up to 12 weeks of paid maternity leave after their child's birth, and all Servicemembers up to three weeks of paid leave after adopting a newborn (limited to one parent in households where both parents serve in the Armed Forces).

Problem:

These outdated policies can discourage adoption or fostering of children, penalize single parents as well as dual-military couple households—and they have fallen far behind the policies of leading private-sector employers competing with our Armed Forces for new recruits. Additionally, prior to Defense Secretary Carter's "force of the future" announcement earlier this year, each of the services had developed unique policies, procedures and regulations to modernize their own leave practices—resulting in fragmented and disparate leave standards across the Department.

Solution:

Congresswoman Duckworth's Military Parental Leave Modernization Act consolidates the services' confusing adoption, paternity, and maternity leave policies into a single parental leave policy that is consistent and equitable. Specifically, the Congresswoman's proposal:

- Allows all Servicemembers—regardless of gender—to receive at least 12 weeks of paid parental leave;
- Eliminates policies that treat adoptive and foster parents as less deserving of parental leave; and
- Removes antiquated policies that fail to recognize modern family composition.

Modernizing military parental leave policies will not only strengthens the Department's ability to compete with the private sector for top talent, but will also enable Servicemembers to fulfill what the Secretary of Defense described as, "...two of the most solemn commitments they can ever make: a commitment to serve their country and a commitment to start and support a family."

Simply put, all parents need and deserve an opportunity to bond with their new children—and that includes our military families, which routinely make significant sacrifices in support of the Nation. The Military Parental Leave Modernization Act reflects our commitment to supporting and maintaining them. If our Armed Forces are to recruit and retain the world's best troops, Congress must lead and take action to ensure our military offers some of the world's best benefits and parental leave policies.

The National Women's Law Center (NWLC) and the National Partnership for Women & Families endorsed Rep. Duckworth's Military Parental Leave Modernization Act.