

House of Representatives
Judiciary Committee
Task Force on Domestic Relations
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Gentlemen,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to come before you today. I appreciate the opportunity to present my perspectives as a military wife. To give you just a little background, my husband and I were married almost two years before he entered the Army as a Second Lieutenant from the Reserve Officers Training Program. He will be retiring at the end of next month at which time he and I will have completely about twenty-eight and a half years of service. We have spent 11 years in Germany during 4 different assignments, 3 years in Washington State, three years in New Jersey, a year and a half in Florida, six years in Northern Virginia at the Pentagon and several shorter assignments in other locations. During this time my husband and I were separated by his military service for about 18 months. Our daughter attended 10 schools between Kindergarten and her senior year in high school and our son, who was born overseas, attended 8.

I strongly believe that military service is not a job but a life style. Both the service member and his or her family must commit themselves to serving the nation and therefore must give up some of the things they may be called on to defend. These include the ability to put down long term roots in a community, the comfort of staying near family, building up equity in a home, and having their children in the same school system for longer than two or three years at a stretch. And specifically, the service member's spouse also gives up, in most cases, many opportunities for a satisfying career. In summary, clearly home has been where the Army sent us.

The Army community has been my home as much as it has been my husband's. It some ways more. Committed Army (and other service I am sure) spouses provide our own sense of community wherever we go. Most of the social services on installations are volunteer based, unit spouses become surrogate parents for young spouses (and in many cases soldiers) thousands of miles away from home for the first time, in short the Army does become a family. And, although in recent years the Army, in reaction to society's changes, no longer officially recognizes my contributions on my husband's efficiency reports, there is no question in my mind that my contributions and those of all other military spouses are absolutely essential in maintaining your Army as the best in the world.

Thank you again for this opportunity to express my views.

Pamela T. Lord