

STATEMENT

This statement is submitted in response to the invitation of Ms Karen L. Dalton, Counsel to the Judiciary Committee, Pennsylvania House of Representatives, reference House Bill 2265.

I am Charles F. Kriete, Chaplain (Col) USA, (Retired) and I reside at 205 Frost Road, Gardners, Pa 17234. I served as an Army Chaplain for 27 years, the first twelve years as chaplain of various troop units at Ft Benning, GA; Schweinfurt, Germany; Ft Knox, KY; the Republic of Vietnam; and Gelnhausen, Germany. My last fifteen years of duty included tours of duty as a strategic analyst assigned to the Strategic Studies Institute, USAWC; Director of Plans, Programs and Policies for the Chief of Army Chaplains; Commandant of the US Army Chaplain Center and School; and Director of Professionalism Studies at the Army War College. Since retirement from the Army I have been employed as Manager of Organization Development, BMY, Inc., a Division of HARSCO Corp; as a consultant for the KETRON Corp.; legislative aide to State Rep John H. Broujos, 199th Legislative District of Pa; and interim pastor, First United Church of Christ, Carlisle, Pa. I am a graduate of Heidelberg College, Tiffin, Ohio; Union Theological Seminary, New York City; the US Army Command and General Staff College, Ft Leavenworth, KS; and the US Army War College, Carlisle, PA. In May of this year I was elected a Distinguished Fellow of the Army War College "Hall of Fame" for former faculty.

My experiences as a clergyman in these very diverse professional assignments and employments help me to appreciate the differences one finds between military life and civilian life, both of which provide advantages and disadvantages to married persons, with consequent stresses and supports to the social institution of marriage and the family. I consider that HB 2265 as drafted is a remarkably clear, concise, and equitable proposal which represents a sound compromise between possible extremes.

Military societies are very different socially from American civilian life. Soldiers incur an unlimited liability upon taking the oath to defend their country, and that liability is expressed in many different ways by the organization and culture of the life of the installation where the members reside, even if they live off-post. We are on call 24 hours a day, seven days each week, except when on leave (and that can be recalled in an emergency). We are subject to the orders of a chain of command which reaches into every nook and cranny of our public lives and has an enormous (and largely unanticipated by most enlistees) effect on how we carry out our private as well as public affairs. This is more true for non-commissioned officers than other enlisted persons, especially true for commissioned officers, and intensively true for field grade and general officers. The latter three groups are the ones most likely to be affected by this legislation, since it takes a minimum of 20 years of service to earn retirement.

In all military services, the Commander is responsible "for everything that the unit does or fails to do". This law, part of the Uniform Code of Military Justice enacted by the US Congress, has no parallel in civilian life. Because of the pervasive nature of military discipline and customs, the nature of command and the obligations it lays on those who lead at each level for the welfare of subordinates and the unit as a whole, families (especially spouses) have a disproportionate

impact on career success . Officers at all levels are judged not only on their technical ability to perform duties, but also on their social and leadership skills. Performance of current duties is only one of the factors which goes into the equation used to determine potential for successful performance at the next higher level of responsibility, and therefore for promotion to the next higher grade. The degree to which one's spouse participates in, supports effectively, and promotes unit and community activities is a significant factor in how the community perceives the military member, and therefore how the command sees his or her leadership potential. One can also be held accountable for the behavior of one's spouse and one's children in the military community. I well remember a bitterly cold January day in Schweinfurt, Germany when my five year old son and I nearly froze cleaning off the remains of mud balls on the wall of a utility building where he had thrown them with several of his little friends to entertain themselves the previous day, at the direction of the Post Engineer and my commander. That sort of thing happens very rarely in the civilian community because there is no Post Engineer, and no commander. I also recall my great surprise when, on retirement, I looked through the file of Efficiency Reports I had accumulated over 27 years and discovered that my wife was mentioned in over three-quarters of them.

To summarize, at least in the Army, and I am sure in the Navy and Marines also, spouses make a significant contribution to the effectiveness of their military counterparts, because of the nature of the military community itself, and have in effect earned the retirement annuity that the military member receives in his or her own name. I am sure this is true in the Air Force also, but I have not had personal experience with Air Force members that I have had with the other services. HB 2265 does justice to that contribution, in my opinion.