



JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE
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EMBARGOED FOR MOTHER'S DAY:
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HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY? NEW JEC REPORT REVEALS MILITARY MOMS FACE TOUGH CHALLENGES TO GET MENTAL HEALTH CARE, CHILD CARE, AND FAMILY LEAVE

*Retaining Qualified and Trained Service Members Is a Growing Problem Because
Military Can't Provide Child Care for 35,000 Kids, Lacks Comparable Federal
Family Leave Benefits, and Offers Limited Mental Health Services*

*Schumer and Maloney Release Joint Economic Committee Report Highlighting
Progress Made and Work Still to Be Done to Give Military Moms the Benefits
They Deserve*

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer and Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively of the Joint Economic Committee (JEC), released a Mother's Day report revealing that mothers serving in the military and spouses of soldiers face difficult child care access, leave and health care services challenges. Women represent one in seven U.S. military personnel in Iraq. Like all mothers, military moms face challenges in meeting monthly expenses, getting good child care and health care for their families and themselves. But military moms face the added burden of longer deployments and frequent separation from their children and spouses. While the military has taken steps to address the needs of mothers, the JEC report finds that more still needs to be done.

Sen. Schumer said, "Military moms are a special breed who sacrifice a lot for very little in return. America owes them a tremendous debt for their service and the service of their loved ones. Military moms should have easy access to mental health care, quality child care, and enough time off to spend with their newborn or sick children. If the military wants to keep its best and brightest, it should wish them a Happy Mother's Day in action, not just words."

The full report "This Mother's Day: Helping Military Moms Balance Work and Longer Deployments" can be found at www.jec.senate.gov.

The Joint Economic Committee report found big challenges facing military mothers:

- Child care services are not meeting current needs, which doesn't reflect increased deployment demands;
- Short family leave periods after child birth and adoption hurt retention of women; and
- Limited resources for mental health services to help military mothers and their children cope with the periods before, during and after deployment

"Making sure military mothers have the quality child care, generous family leave, and access to mental health services they need is key to their family well-being and our national security," said Rep. Maloney. "Our military families are sacrificing so much in defense of our nation. We need to do all we can to support our troops. Not addressing these issues could have serious implications for the retention of women in the military, and the readiness and effectiveness of our forces."

Child Care Costs:

Since the U.S. military's presence in Iraq, hundreds of thousands of children have seen one or both parents leave for deployment. According to the Department of Defense, in September 2006, approximately 230,000 children had parents in Iraq, Afghanistan or the Horn of Africa.

The military has increased the number of available child care centers, but the National Military Families Association estimates that the military is approximately 35,000 short of expected need.

Short Family Leave:

A 2002 Government Accountability Office (GAO) study found that more than one-third of attrition for female enlistees in 1993 was triggered by pregnancy and child-care concerns and approximately 10 percent of all active duty women become pregnant every year and evidence indicates this problem will continue to be a problem during the current conflict.

New mothers may only take six weeks of paid convalescent leave after the birth of a child. Both new mothers and new fathers may also use annual leave. New mothers on deployment receive a 4-to-6 month deferment from deployment duty away from the home station for the period immediately following the birth of child.

Access to Mental Health Services:

Studies showed that after Operation Desert Storm and Operation Desert Shield, women with children reported a higher rate of emotional health problems after deployment (64 percent) than women without children (39 percent), including anxiety and difficulty readjusting after deployment. In addition, children reported emotional stress during their parents' absence. At the time, mothers had difficulties accessing appropriate services, negatively impacting their and their children's' mental health and relationships.

This month, a Department of Defense study released found that lengthier deployments in Iraq are adversely affecting service members' mental health.

Important Facts about Military Mothers:

- Women make up approximately 14.3 percent of the active duty military (one in seven).

- Nearly half of all women in active duty force have been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, and according to the Department of Defense in February 2007, 24,475 women are currently deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan.
- Nearly half of women in the active duty force are in the lower pay grades, earning between \$14,436 and \$24,744 as their base salary.
- Forty Percent of Women in the Active Duty Force Are Mothers
- Majority of First-Time Military Moms are Young and Low-to-Moderate Income Mothers
- Military spouses and their children make up a significant percentage of the larger military community and 93 percent of military spouses are women.

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The Joint Economic Committee, established under the Employment Act of 1946, was created by Congress to review economic conditions and to analyze the effectiveness of economic policy.

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