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CITY BAR

**COMMITTEE ON  
MILITARY AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE**

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January 25, 2017

The President Donald J. Trump  
and First Lady Melania Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

**Re: Joining Forces Initiative**

Dear Mr. President and Mrs. Trump:

In 2011, former First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden established "Joining Forces," an initiative to support members of the armed forces and their families. I urge you to continue this initiative to further your support of those defending our country and whose contributions you have often praised.

Attached is a summary of some areas in which Joining Forces makes a difference. In employment, for example, Joining Forces assisted the New York City Bar Association's Military Affairs and Justice Committee in spearheading passage of a Bill in Albany that recognized the out-of-state occupational licenses of military spouses ordered to move to New York.

By way of example, imagine you have a license to cut hair from Virginia. Your spouse, an Army sergeant, is ordered to New York. Prior to the enactment of this Bill, New York would require you to take hair-cutting classes that you have already taken in Virginia (demoralizing), pay for them (a waste of money), and then wait approximately a year to obtain the license. A year with no income because you moved to a new state is particularly harmful to military families who often move once every two to three years. Now multiply this by well-over one hundred occupations that require licensure in New York and you can begin to see how damaging this is—not only to the financial security of military families, but also to national security. Demoralizing licensure constraints, such as these, encourage attrition and thus harm the national military readiness of our all-volunteer force. There is simply no basis to add to the many burdens military families must already endure.

With the help of Joining Forces, by 2015 every state except New York passed a law to remedy this. Joining Forces provided us with critical support as we lobbied New York legislators to enact this Bill. Governor Cuomo signed it into law after a multi-year effort that included support from Joining Forces, military interest groups, and even the Pentagon. Therefore, we can speak first-hand to the utility of the Joining Forces initiative, and encourage you to continue its efforts.

The Military Affairs and Justice Committee focuses on issues concerning the U.S. Armed Forces. Our team of approximately 30 lawyers (acting pro bono) have deep backgrounds in military law, military operations, and the U.S. intelligence community. Indeed, many have served within the U.S. National Security community and some are in the reserves. We have written on military justice reform (at the request of the Defense Department), held debates regarding the pre-trial proceedings at Guantanamo Bay and on women in combat, lobbied for legislation that assists military families, supported litigation on improving care for veterans, and much more. We would be grateful for any opportunity to assist you.

Yours Very Respectfully,



Michael P. Richter

Cc: Hon. Mike Pence  
Mrs. Karen Pence  
Mr. Reince Priebus  
Hon. Dr. David J. Shulkin

## JOINING FORCES: OVERVIEW<sup>1</sup>

### **Joining Forces Commitments: Employment, Education, Wellness**

Joining Forces is committed to raising awareness about the service, sacrifice, and needs of military families. In particular, with the input of military families, Joining Forces identified three priority areas for national initiatives: employment, education, and wellness.

#### **Employment**

- Expand employment and career development opportunities for veterans and military spouses.
- Highlight the workforce potential of veterans and military spouses.
- Educate employers about the need to create military family-friendly workplaces.
- Work to reduce or eliminate licensing and credentialing barriers.

#### **Education**

- Promote expanded education opportunities that:
  - Ease transferability for military-connected students.
  - Increase job training opportunities for military spouses and veterans.
- Support the academic achievement of military children by enhancing awareness of the unique needs of military children and families.

#### **Wellness**

- Call attention to the critical issues facing veterans and military families.
- Expand access to wellness programs, and resources for military spouses and families.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, see <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/joiningforces>.