



# NORTH DAKOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE CAPITOL  
600 EAST BOULEVARD  
BISMARCK, ND 58505-0360



## Representative Corey Mock

District 18  
P.O. Box 12542  
Grand Forks, ND 58208-2542  
C: 701-732-0085  
[crmoc@nd.gov](mailto:crmoc@nd.gov)

**COMMITTEES:**  
Appropriations

March 9, 2021

## HB 1278 – Unemployment Compensation for Military Spouses

Chairman Jerry Klein and members of the Senate Industry, Business and Labor Committee. My name is Corey Mock, Representative for District 18 in Grand Forks and sponsor of HB 1278.

This legislation comes specifically at the request of military families stationed at Grand Forks and Minot Air Force Bases and has the full-throated support of our nation's Department of Defense and other military organizations.

As of today, North Dakota is one of only two states in the United States that does not allow military spouses to qualify for unemployment insurance when relocating due to a permanent change of station (PCS).

Our state law is fairly clear: voluntary separation between an employee and their employer would not qualify for unemployment. Despite military spouses not having a choice when their family receives new orders, we still consider this lapse of employment a "voluntary" separation.

HB 1278 closes this gap by allowing military spouses transferring away from a North Dakota base to qualify for limited unemployment benefits.

A qualifying applicant would adhere to all other existing unemployment requirements and practices:

- Notify their employer of the separation
- Exhaust all options to maintain employment with their employer
- Satisfy the one-week mandatory waiting period
- Report weekly job search progress to Job Service ND

Considerable work was done by the House Industry Business and Labor to get the language right and reduce potential impact on individual premiums.

Section 1 was added to ensure any future claims filed under this law would apply to the entire unemployment insurance pool, as opposed to being a claim against an individual employer.

Section 2 was amended to limit this section only to permanent change of station orders; a definition of permanent change of station orders was added to provide additional clarity for Job Service North Dakota.

It was agreed by all parties to remove an original section of the bill that limited benefits to 12 weeks for eligible claims. Originally added to reduce the fiscal impact this would have on the unemployment insurance reserve fund, it was determined this would not conform to federal US Department of Labor guidelines.

As you'll hear from others testifying after me, this legislation is critically important to ensure North Dakota is best positioned to not only **maintain** our two Air Force bases but **attract** new missions as our military adapts to our changing world.

We hope you'll stand with military families fortunate enough to be stationed in our beautiful state. By giving HB 1278 a do pass recommendation, you're reinforcing that North Dakota is an ideal home for our armed services.

Thank you for your time and consideration.