

Omaha *COMPETES*

Military Workforce



Offutt AFB, Nebraska's Military Workforce Engine



As Nebraska seeks to address its workforce development challenges, an often-under-discussed area of potential comes from the military to civilian pipeline. Retaining servicemembers and their families upon retirement provides the state with households that offer high technical skills, leadership experience, security clearances, and existing ties to the community. Nebraska has a particularly strong

opportunity given the roughly 6,900 servicemembers stationed at Offutt Air Force Base¹. Of those stationed at Offutt, roughly 1,000 complete active military service annually², providing a potential recurring pool of talent for Nebraska's employers.

Other states have increasingly recognized these benefits and moved aggressively to reduce friction for military families, especially around spouse employment and professional licensure. The Department of Defense's Defense-State Liaison Office has set a "baseline" expectation that states should enable spouses to obtain a professional license within 30 days with minimal paperwork, and notes that states have enacted a large volume of legislation in recent years to improve spouse employment, licensing, and related quality-of-life factors³. In that national context, Nebraska's recent reforms, combined with community-based implementation efforts, position the state well, as well as point to additional low and no-cost steps that could further improve retention by ensuring military families can quickly translate their skills into Nebraska careers.

Current Nebraska Efforts

Fortunately, Nebraska starts in a strong position. For years, Legislators have recognized the benefits of attracting Veterans and their families, and have been proactive in implementing policies meant to make it easier for families of servicemembers to establish roots in Nebraska and thrive.

The genesis of the recent wave of legislation started with LR436 in 2018, an interim study filed by Senator Sue Crawford (Bellevue) to examine possible accommodations for occupational licenses of military spouses and retiring servicemembers. The report found that, while the legislature had made positive steps in many DHHS licenses by allowing some credit toward licensure requirements from relevant military training⁴ and allowing temporary transition licenses for up to one year⁵, Nebraska's licensure laws still

created unnecessary barriers and duplicative training in the areas of cosmetology, dental hygiene, massage therapy, mental health counseling, occupational therapy, real estate, teaching, and nursing⁶.

Many of the recommendations from LR436 were eventually adopted into LB16 (2024), introduced by Senator Danielle Conrad (Lincoln), a comprehensive law that requires all occupational boards to issue a Nebraska occupational license/certification for credentials gained in another state, or through work experience in the U.S. Armed Forces when the scope of work was similar to the scope of the Nebraska license being sought.

¹<https://veterans.nebraska.gov/sites/default/files/doc/1.%20NCMVA%20Final%20Report%2011-15-2023.pdf>

²<https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/state-hosts-inaugural-event-to-promote-veterans-workforce-recruitment>

³https://www.army.mil/article/287026/defense_state_liaison_office_supports_military_families

⁴LB264 (2015)

⁵LB88 (2017)

⁶LR436 Study (2018), <https://veterans.nebraska.gov/sites/default/files/doc/9.%202018%2010%2023%20-%20LR%20436%20Report%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

In practice, LB16 moves Nebraska from a DHHS-centric approach (health professions under the Uniform Credentialing Act) to a statewide standard that applies across occupational boards. It also changes the training paradigm for servicemembers transitioning to civilian careers by moving away from licensing to standards that require them to start over, and instead recognizing prior out-of-state licensure and military experience as continuous, applicable experience in Nebraska.

For military families, this provides two crucial benefits. First, and most importantly, it removes a massive point of friction in training requirements and time lost to obtaining the credential before servicemembers can perform work they've often already been doing for decades. Second, it signals that Nebraska is a place where they can build a civilian life. These improvements greatly increase Nebraska's competitiveness in Veteran retention.

On top of this, Nebraska has significantly strengthened non-fiscal support for servicemembers and spouses. DHHS now publicly markets temporary spouse licenses, military training credit, and license-fee waivers; the Real Estate Commission and State Personnel have added explicit benefits and career programs for military families⁷.

Additionally, Nebraska strengthened its support for military-connected workers through LB144 (2025), introduced by Senator Victor Rountree (Bellevue). This legislation amended state statutes to explicitly allow private-sector employers to voluntarily offer hiring preferences for both Veterans and military spouses⁸. While public-sector preference has long existed, extending clear statutory permission to private employers removes legal ambiguity and enables businesses, particularly those near Offutt, to actively compete for military-affiliated talent.

This change gives Nebraska employers another low-cost tool to recruit skilled workers and signals to military families that the state values their contributions to the civilian workforce.

In addition to legislative solutions, community leaders the Omaha region have taken a forward approach to providing resources to Veterans and their families to ease transitions and provide information about quality of life in Greater Omaha. In October 2024, Offutt AFB opened the Nebraska Resource Center, a public-private partnership led by the Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs, partnered with the Greater Omaha Chamber. The Offutt AFB Resource Center acts as a "one front door" hub for servicemembers and families, to make it easier to connect people to jobs, spouse employment supports, housing, childcare, schools, benefits navigation, and local services; reducing friction that pushes families to leave.

The Nebraska Resource Center(NRC) is an example of community leaders serving as the implementation bridge between the abstract nature of policy, and the day-to-day interaction with these policies in practice. Since opening, over 2,500 unique individuals have been assisted by the Nebraska Resource Center, with strong local impact. Among the largest areas of assistance are VA claims, with over 900 claims actions. The claims-related work performed at the NRC has increased the monthly payout to Nebraska Veterans by \$106,022 via 54 individuals' claims processed. In addition, the work at the NRC has assisted Nebraska Veterans in receiving a combined \$472,784 in lump sum retroactive payments⁹. Whether assisting with a claim related action, providing licensure and career assistance, helping with transitional housing, or even giving tips on recreation and weekend activities in the Greater Omaha region, each of these visits helps servicemembers establish roots in the community.

⁷<https://dhhs.ne.gov/licensure/Documents/VeteransInfoBrochure.pdf>

⁸LB144 (2025) <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/109/PDF/Slip/LB144.pdf>

⁹Nebraska Resource Center December 2025 Data Request



Additional Policy Measures to Consider

LB16 provides expansive reform for military families and positions Nebraska as a state that's clear in its intent to be a community which is welcoming to military families in building their post-service civilian

careers. With this being said, there are still additional low and no-cost ways that other states have further sought to reduce friction for military families.

Hard Timelines for Licensure Decisions

First, in order to prevent administrative backlogs from affecting time-sensitive employment opportunities, a number of states have hard deadlines, often 30 days or fewer, for licensing boards to approve applications for military spouses. For example, Missouri requires agencies to issue licensing decisions for military spouses within 30 days, while Mississippi grants

an automatic temporary license if no decision is made within two weeks¹⁰, and North Dakota grants a provisional license if the board does not approve or deny the application in 30 days¹¹. Nebraska could mirror this universal "decide by" method, and prevent administrative backlogs from affecting servicemembers and their families.

Risk of Harm Standard

Furthermore, while Nebraska uses a "similar standards" paradigm for servicemember state reciprocity, North Dakota has adopted the standard that licenses from other states shall be accepted if issuance "will not substantially increase the risk of harm to the public"¹². Nebraska's standard invites slow, subjective comparisons of statutes and training hours. The practical benefit to North Dakota's licensure process is speed and predictability; military spouses and transitioning servicemembers can

enter the workforce faster, reducing financial strain and improving the likelihood a family stays in-state, while still preserving a public-safety backstop for boards to deny applicants who pose a genuine risk. This shifts the burden from proving equivalency to demonstrating risk, which typically means faster licensing, fewer denials for technical differences, and a more predictable experience for military spouses and separating servicemembers.

Apply-Before-Arrival (Apply-on-Orders) Processing

Finally, Nebraska could further reduce employment gaps by explicitly allowing military spouses and transitioning servicemembers to apply for occupational licenses before they physically relocate, using Permanent Change of Station orders (PCS) orders as proof of an impending move, a policy already in place in Illinois¹³. Even when eligibility standards are strong, families can still lose weeks of income if boards require in-state residency, an in-state address, or in-person steps before an application is processed. Other states address this by treating orders as sufficient to begin verification, background checks, and review so that applicants can be work-ready immediately upon arrival. Nebraska

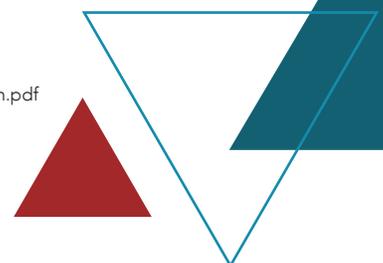
could adopt a universal "apply-on-orders" provision requiring licensing boards to accept and begin processing applications upon receipt of PCS orders (and dependent ID where relevant), without delaying solely due to residency or physical presence. This is a low-cost administrative change that complements LB16 by ensuring the benefits of reciprocity and recognition are delivered on a timeline that actually matters for retention; shortening the time between a move and a first paycheck, reducing financial strain, and making Nebraska a more competitive place for military families to put down roots.

¹⁰<https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/VETS/files/Military-Spouse-License-Recognition-A-Guide-to-State-Legislation.pdf>

¹¹NDCC § 43-51-11.1 <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/VETS/files/state-laws/NORTH-DAKOTA.pdf>

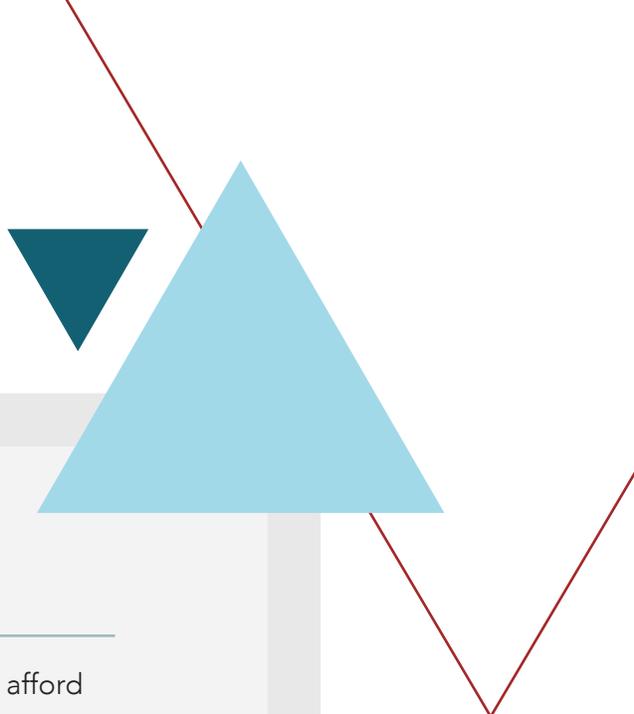
¹²NDCC § 75.5-02-05-02 <https://www.law.cornell.edu/regulations/north-dakota/N-D-A-C-75.5-02-05-02>

¹³<https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/military-spouse-licensure-report-2019.pdf>









CONCLUSION

In a tight labor market, Nebraska cannot afford to leave talent on the sidelines, especially talent-already connected to the state through Offutt AFB. The reforms Nebraska has enacted, paired with on-the-ground implementation through the Nebraska Resource Center, signal real progress toward making military-to-civilian transitions faster and more predictable. By building on LB16 legislative achievements with a few additional low- and no-cost administrative improvements- hard timelines for decisions, a clearer risk-based standard, and apply-on-orders processing- Nebraska can further reduce avoidable employment gaps for military families, strengthen retention of retiring servicemembers, and convert Offutt's steady pipeline of skilled professionals into long-term residents who contribute to the state's workforce, tax base, and community stability.



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