

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 8, 2026

Mr. Scott Kuper
Director
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
1900 E St NW
Washington, DC 20415

Dear Director Kuper,

We write today about the concerning fact that Federal agencies are largely failing in their commitment to retain federal employees who are military spouses, which weakens our military readiness, exacts a toll on the families and communities that support our servicemembers, and ultimately causes our government to lose the valuable expertise and skills of this population.

Military service is shouldered by the entire family, with partners and spouses, kids, parents, and other family members working to balance the challenges that exist back home while a loved one is deployed. Over the years, Congress has worked hard with successive administrations to improve upon the network of support available to these families, and local communities and support organizations across the country have stepped in to try to fill gaps that still exist.

More must be done to support these families, and that remains a priority for us in the Senate. From many of our Virginia constituents, some of whom just lived through a historic 11-month deployment, we continue to hear about the challenges impacting military spouses during those deployment period, including workplace inflexibility.

For military spouses who themselves are federal employees, we must ensure that the workplace understands their needs and challenges, and works to address those. Data collection by OPM shows that agencies are falling short in military spouse retention, despite direction to agencies to work to meet the needs of military spouses. We are urging OPM and Federal agencies to: 1) immediately determine what is leading to lower retention of military spouses relative to other federal employees; 2) identify the flexibilities and best practices that currently exist and can improve those retention rates; 3) direct federal agencies to implement these best practices and, to the maximum extent practicable, utilize these flexibilities; and 4) communicate with Congress if any additional resources or changes in law are needed to succeed, all of which would fulfill the commitments OPM and agencies have already made to best serve this population.

As you know, in June 2023, President Biden signed Executive Order (EO) 14100, *Advancing Economic Security for Military and Veteran Spouses, Military Caregivers, and Survivors*.¹ Subsequently, in November 2023, OPM released *Guidance in Support of Executive Order 14100* (“Guidance”).² The Guidance directed agencies to: (1) review and evaluate the use of telework and remote work that may benefit military spouses; (2) implement up to five days of administrative leave for federal civilian employees accompanying a spouse in the military during a geographic relocation directed by a servicemember’s orders; (3) ensure existing workplace flexibilities, such as alternative work schedules, are provided to military spouses, and also to “adopt policies that promote the use of additional workplace flexibilities that will further assist military spouses;” and (4) utilize and actively promote existing retention tools, such as reassignments, as well “other flexible work arrangements to accommodate the unique needs of military spouses.”³ The Guidance notes that “successful implementation of these flexibilities will help your agency achieve its objectives under [EO 14100] and strengthen our mutually reinforcing partnership.”⁴

Additionally, EO 14100 directed OPM and OMB, in consultation with certain other departments, to develop and issue a Government-wide Military-Connected Strategic Plan. We were pleased to see this important work, the *Government-wide Military-Connected Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years (FYs) 2024 – 2028* (“Strategic Plan”) released in February 2024.⁵ In OPM’s accompanying memo, then-Director Kiran Ahuja notes that an overarching directive in the Strategic Plan is that “agencies must incorporate recruitment and retention goals in their Human Capital Operating Plans or other internal agency strategic plans that can record their commitments and strategies to address specific areas where there is an underrepresentation or resource deficiencies for military-connected families.”⁶

In the Strategic Plan, some of the action items to be taken include: “when considering flexible work arrangement, agency policies could remind managers and supervisors to consider the unique needs of military spouses, caregivers, and survivors” and that one indicator of progress on this is for agencies to publish guidance highlighting flexible arrangements, in order to increase the percentage of military connected-families hiring and retention. Additional actions include reducing barriers for military-connected employees to access workplace flexibilities. An additional action item included OPM adding a question on the Government-wide Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (OPM FEVS) to “capture this population’s organizational climate

¹ <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2023-12974>

² <https://www.opm.gov/chcoc/published-memos/guidance-in-support-of-executive-order-14100-advancing-economic-security-for-military-and-veteran-spouses-military-caregivers-and-survivors.pdf>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ https://www.opm.gov/chcoc/transmittals/2024/EO%2014100%20Gwide%20Military-Connected%20Strategic%20Plan%20Joint%20Memo%202-27-24_0.pdf

⁶ Ibid.

experience” as well as increase the number of military-connected employees’ responses to OPM FEVS.⁷

In January 2026, OPM reported on the U.S. Government’s progress under the Strategic Plan through the *FY 2024 Employment of Veterans and Military-Connected Spouses and Survivors in the Federal Executive Branch Report* (“Report”).⁸ Although we appreciate OPM’s continued commitment to EO 14100 and continued work on these important goals, particularly with regard to hiring, we are deeply concerned by recent years’ lack of progress related to retention of military spouses.

In the Report, in FY 2024, Executive Branch agencies showed a retention rate of 77.60% for non-veterans, 73.79% for veterans, and 65.78% for military spouses. The report noted that “despite efforts to integrate [military spouses] into the workforce, challenges remain in maintaining their long-term employment within government agencies.”⁹ Actions that agencies highlighted that they believed showcased this commitment to military spouses largely neglected employee retention, or were overly broad and not specific to military spouses.

We understand that President Trump was not in office during the fiscal year covered by the data and actions taken in the Report. But the Report and the preceding FY 2023 version of it, were both developed by this Trump Administration. Both reports highlighted the existence of retention challenges for military spouses, but neither detailed root causes or identified instances of demonstrated agency success, which could then be replicated across government.

So that Congress can best partner with the Executive Branch to improve retention of military spouses in federal agencies, please provide answers to the following questions:

1. What does OPM believe are the biggest specific challenges facing retention of federal employees who are military spouses?
2. Across all agencies, what is the rate of usage of the below flexibilities for federal employees who are military spouses, compared with non-military spouses:
 - a. Telework;
 - b. Remote work;
 - c. Compressed work schedules;
 - d. Flexible work schedules;
 - e. Any other alternative work schedule besides compressed and flexible;

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ <https://www.opm.gov/fedshirevets/hiring-officials/veteran-employment-data/fy-2024-employment-of-veterans-and-military-connected-spouses-and-survivors-in-the-federal-executive-branch-report.pdf>

⁹ Ibid.

3. Across all agencies, what is the rate of denials of military spouse federal employee requests for the following:
 - a. Telework;
 - b. Remote work;
 - c. Compressed work schedules;
 - d. Flexible work schedules;
 - e. Any other alternative work schedule besides compressed and flexible;
4. Please share documentation outlining each agency's efforts to incorporate retention goals specific to this population in their Human Capital Operating Plans, or other internal agency strategic plans that can record their commitments and strategies, as directed by OPM in its memo accompanying the Strategic Plan.
5. Please share the specific question that will be on the 2026 OPM FEVS regarding this population, as OPM committed to doing in the Strategic Plan. (We note that OPM declined to conduct this survey at all in 2025, despite such a survey being required by law.)
6. OPM noted perfect military spouse retention rates in FY 2024 for USAID, EPA and NSF. What specifically were those agencies doing well to retain military spouses? (We do note that USAID has been illegally dismantled, and cannot be consulted on this question; nevertheless, we ask that OPM provide appropriate documentation from USAID from FY 2024.)
7. OPM also notes that certain agencies are performing below the average on military spouse retention; what are the specific deficiencies in those agencies' practices?
8. What is OPM's plan to disseminate those best practices and learnings to all agencies?
9. What are OPM's recommendations for actions that all agencies must take in order for the Executive Branch to meet its commitment to retain this population?
10. What resources, statutory flexibilities, or other support does OPM need from Congress in order to have each agency raise their military spouse retention rates, to be at least in-line with non-military spouses?

We request this information no later than July 10, 2026. We stand ready to partner with you on ways to improve the retention of military spouse federal employees, but it is critical that OPM and the Executive Branch do its part outlining the challenges and ways to improve. We look forward to working with you on this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator