



# LASC Adopts Revision to Louisiana License Requirement Impacting Military Spouse Attorneys

By Alexis Polk Joachim

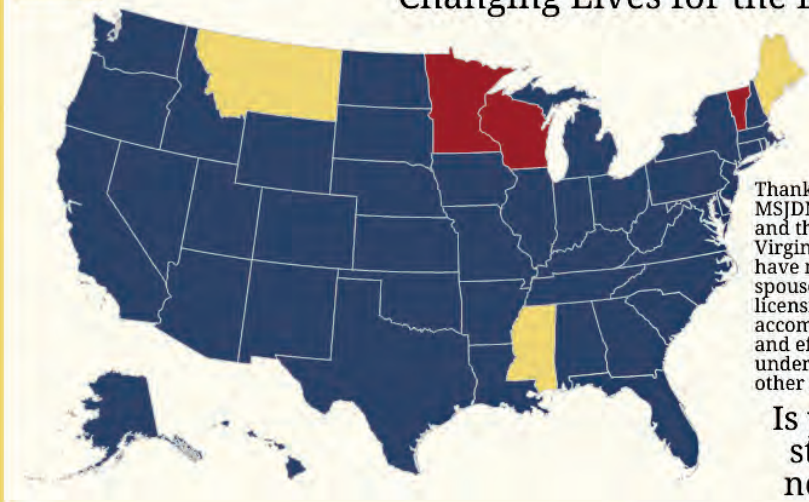
The challenges faced by a military spouse are plentiful — planning for deployment, planning for a relocation every two to four years, coordinating new housing and new schools, and so much more. Adding to these tasks a career, let alone a legal career, is almost impossible. A military spouse attempting to build a legal career is in a unique position, as he or she straddles the line between the military and civilian life. One of the more daunting tasks is the frequent geographical moves coupled with the obstacle of determining the legal licensing requirements for each new state. A spouse may face multiple state bar exams to allow him or her to continue practicing law during the spouse’s military career. The time and money invested to ensure a continuous legal career can be cumbersome and onerous.





# Military Spouse JD Network

## Changing Lives for the Better



Thanks to MSJDN, 44 states and the U.S. Virgin Islands have military spouse attorney licensing accommodations and efforts are underway in 3 other states.

Is your state next?

As the wife of a former Marine, I know firsthand the challenges a military spouse faces. I was faced with these exact issues when I married my Marine husband and learned that his duty station was transferring from Louisiana to Virginia/Washington D.C. My first thought was, do I have to take another bar exam (or maybe two) to maintain my livelihood as an attorney in another state? The thought of studying for another bar exam and taking the test to be licensed in another state when we may or may not stay there was intimidating and overwhelming. Fortunately for me, the Washington, DC Bar allowed attorneys to waive into the bar after practicing for five years. I also was fortunate that my husband was able to renew his orders in Virginia/Washington, DC before we were able to move back to Louisiana, thereby limiting the number of relocations and bars I needed to ensure I could continue practicing law. Other military spouses, however, are not so lucky. These spouses are faced with that same question: Do I take another state's bar exam, knowing that my time there is limited but still wanting to contribute and maintain a continuous legal professional career?

To address this issue, the Military Spouse JD Network was born. The network advocates for licensing accommodations for military spouses, including bar membership without additional examination. With the group's support, the American Bar Association approved a resolution urging states to adopt rules, regulations and procedures that accommodate the unique needs of military spouse attorneys who move frequently in support of the nation's defense. In addition, the Conference of Chief Justices approved a resolution urging bar admission authorities to participate in the development and implementation of rules permitting admission without examination for qualified attorneys who are dependents of service members. As a result of such a push, 43 states and one U.S. territory have passed favorable accommodations for military spouse attorneys.

When I proposed a similar rule for Louisiana to then-Louisiana State Bar Association President H. Minor Pipes III, he did not hesitate to support military spouses and immediately endorsed a similar rule in Louisiana. Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice John L. Weimer and

the associate justices understood that the Court was in a unique position to send a powerful message of support to the Louisiana military community with the enactment of a rule to support military spouse attorney licensing accommodations.

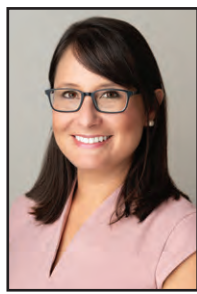
In light of these efforts, the Louisiana Supreme Court adopted a new rule, effective Sept. 23, 2022, which allows military spouse attorneys who reside with their service members in the state to apply for a limited license to practice law. The rule change order stipulates that, due to the need for the frequent relocation of active-duty service members of the United States Uniformed Services, as defined by the United States Department of Defense, attorneys who are the spouses of these members, stationed within Louisiana, may obtain a limited license to practice law without examination according to the terms of Louisiana Supreme Court Rule XVII, Section 15. Specifically, the rule allows for military spouse attorneys to practice in Louisiana for the duration of their spouse's orders under the mentorship of another Louisiana attorney, similar to *pro hac vice* status.

Chief Justice Weimer stated, "I commend the work of the Louisiana State Bar and staff of the Supreme Court who collaborated on this rule change, which allows attorney spouses of active-duty military members who reside with their spouses in Louisiana the opportunity to practice law in our state in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the rule. The Justices of

the Louisiana Supreme Court and I appreciate the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform, and their families, and are glad to join other states that have passed similar rules."

The new rule not only enables a military spouse to practice law in Louisiana but also empowers other Louisiana attorneys to assist and help the military community through meaningful work by mentoring a military spouse attorney. In addition, law firms and state agencies now gain the ability to hire a military spouse attorney, allowing the firm and agency to reap the benefits of a larger candidacy pool. With the rule change, Louisiana became the 44th state to accommodate licensing requirements for military spouses. In the end, the rule change will have a life-changing impact on military spouse attorneys relocating to Louisiana.

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