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★ DISTRICT 2 ★

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Governor Perry Holds Signing Ceremony for Military JOBS Bill



AUSTIN - On Wednesday afternoon Texas Governor Rick Perry hosted a formal signing ceremony for SB 162, continuing the effort to help ease employment challenges for active duty military members and their spouses. SB 162 was developed by State Representative Dan Flynn (R-Van), who also is a Commander in the Texas Maritime Regiment of the Texas State Guard, and Senator Leticia Van de Putte (D-San Antonio), to ease the transition of service members and their families into civilian life by recognizing professional occupational licenses issued by other jurisdictions, including military service, that was not previously recognized.

Senate sponsor, Senator Van de Putte, serves alongside Representative Flynn as Co-Chairs of the Military Task Force of the National Conference of State Legislators, where the issue of licensing military members and their spouses remains a main focus of the committee's work. "We hope this legislation will serve as a model for all states and we look forward to continuing to work with the Department of Defense to find new and better ways to show our appreciation to veterans as they return home." said Representative Flynn.

SB 162 amends current law relating to the occupational licensing eligibility requirements for military members and their spouses and requires state agencies that issue occupational licenses to provide an expedited licensure for military service members, military spouses, and military veterans. Licensing agencies will be required to issue an occupational license to a qualified applicant who holds a current license issued by another jurisdiction, including a branch of the armed forces, as long as that license is substantially equivalent to licensing requirements in Texas. "The unemployment rate among veterans is one of the highest in the United States. If a soldier can dodge IED's in Iraq or Afghanistan while driving a semi they should be able to drive safely on I-35 or I-30 without having to be trained again," stated Flynn. "Considering the sacrifices they made for our country, it is imperative we help their transition to civilian life by giving them credit for the hard work and training they have accomplished in the military," Flynn continued.

This legislation is also known as the 'Chris Kyle' bill because it recognizes the achievements of members of the armed services with special operations training by granting them credit towards the issuance of a basic peace officer's license after they complete a certification test and additional training, as may be determined by the agency. Chris Kyle's widow, Taya Kyle, was on hand to participate in the ceremony and expressed much gratitude for passage of this bill.

"I appreciate the sacrifices these many brave special operators have made and I hope that by incorporating these changes into current Texas law we can honor the legacy of Chris Kyle and the many like him," said Representative Flynn. During the 82nd Legislative Session, Representative Flynn was the author of House Bill 1178 which introduced specific employment protection for members of the state military forces for the very first time.

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