



U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

NOTIFICATION LETTER

ATTENTION: State Licensing Authorities
DATE: December 22, 2025
SUBJECT: Update to Professional License Portability for Servicemembers and Their Spouses

The Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division is issuing this letter to notify State Licensing Authorities of recent updates to the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA). On December 23, 2024, Congress made significant changes to the SCRA provision that allows servicemembers and their spouses to have their professional licenses and certificates recognized in different jurisdictions when they must relocate due to military orders.¹ We request that you carefully review the changes described in this letter, evaluate your practices to ensure compliance with this updated federal law, and help us tackle the issue of military spousal unemployment.²

Introduction

Military families continue to face challenges with frequent moves, child-care, and interruptions or barriers to employment. They often relocate through a process known as “Permanent Change of Station” (PCS) moves. It can be hard to remain employed while constantly and, at times, suddenly moving. According to the 2024 Department of Defense Survey of Active Duty Spouses, the unemployment rate for military spouses who made a PCS move was about 33% higher than spouses who had not made any PCS moves.³ The unemployment rate for military spouses remains around 20%, far higher than the national average of 4.4%.⁴ Spousal unemployment is a leading cause of servicemembers leaving military service and is a significant readiness and retention issue.

¹ On December 23, 2024, the [Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement and National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 \(H.R. 5009\)](#) became law. This law rewrote the section of the SCRA on the portability of professional licenses, including by removing the exception for attorneys. *See* 50 U.S.C. § 4025a; Pub. L. 118-159.

² This notification letter is intended to inform State Licensing Authorities about the enactment of updates to the SCRA. The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public or State Licensing Authorities in any way or to create any enforceable legal rights. This notification letter does not determine the outcome in any particular case or set of facts. In any investigation under the SCRA, the Civil Rights Division makes enforcement decisions based on the facts of that particular case.

³ [2024 Active Duty Spouse Survey \(ADSS\)](#).

⁴ Bureau of Labor Statistics, September 2025 Chart on [Civilian Unemployment Rate](#).

Update to Professional License Portability for Servicemembers and Their Spouses

License portability is one of the ways that the SCRA works to support military families suffering a loss of economic potential while they serve the country. It takes significant time and money to secure a professional license or certificate. The license portability provision in the SCRA helps secure these educational investments and guards against punishing military families, particularly working spouses, for frequent moves that are outside of their control. With the persistence of military spousal unemployment, license portability remains a critical tool for our military spouses to be able to support their families in the manner of their choosing.

Overview of the Updated Law on Professional License Portability

The updated SCRA provision allows servicemembers and their spouses to use their professional licenses and certificates in certain circumstances when they must relocate due to military orders. For a license to be considered valid in a new location, a servicemember or their spouse must satisfy the following criteria:

1. Have a covered license;
2. move to another State due to military orders; and
3. submit an application to the licensing authority of the new State.⁵

If these three criteria are met, the servicemember or their spouse's covered license or certificate "***shall be considered valid*** for the scope of practice in the State of the new residence."⁶

The following sections break down the specifics of some of these requirements:

What is a covered license?

"The term 'covered license' means a professional license that, with respect to a scope of practice—

- (A) is in good standing with the licensing authority that issued such license;
- (B) has not been revoked or had discipline imposed by any State;
- (C) does not have an investigation relating to unprofessional conduct pending in any State relating to it; and
- (D) has not been voluntarily surrendered while under investigation for unprofessional conduct in any State."⁷

What is a State?

"State" is a broad term defined in the SCRA to include a commonwealth, territory, or possession of the United States and the District of Columbia.⁸

⁵ See 50 U.S.C. § 4025a(a).

⁶ See 50 U.S.C. § 4025a(a) (emphasis added).

⁷ See 50 U.S.C. § 4025a(f).

⁸ See 50 U.S.C. § 3911(6).

Update to Professional License Portability for Servicemembers and Their Spouses

What is an application?

A submission by a servicemember or spouse to the new licensing authority that includes the following:

- “(1) Proof of military orders ...;
- (2) If the applicant is the spouse of a servicemember, a copy of the marriage certificate;
- (3) A notarized affidavit affirming, under the penalty of law, that—
 - (A) the applicant is the person described and identified in the application;
 - (B) all statements made in the application are true and correct and complete;
 - (C) the applicant has read and understands the requirements to receive a license, and the scope of practice, of the State of the licensing authority;
 - (D) the applicant certifies that the applicant meets and shall comply with requirements described in subparagraph (C); and
 - (E) the applicant is in good standing in all States in which the applicant holds or has held a license.”⁹

What are military orders?

The term "military orders", with respect to a servicemember, means official military orders (including orders for separation or retirement), or any notification, certification, or verification from the servicemember's commanding officer, with respect to the servicemember's current or future military duty status.¹⁰

Under the updated law, a letter or any written communication from the servicemember's commanding officer indicating a change in the servicemember's duty status satisfies the requirement for proof of military orders. Because the issuance of official military orders can be delayed, a notice from a commanding officer provides a military family with the head start needed to accomplish the myriad tasks that accompany a PCS – from moving to pursuing license portability.

Scope of practice

The term "scope of practice" means the defined parameters of various duties or services that may be provided by an individual under a license.¹¹ Under the updated law, a covered servicemember or spouse's out-of-state license must be considered valid for the scope of practice in the state of the new residence.

⁹ See 50 U.S.C. § 4025a(c).

¹⁰ See 50 U.S.C. § 4025a(f)(4); 50 U.S.C. § 3955(i)(1).

¹¹ See 50 U.S.C. § 4025a(f)(5).

Update to Professional License Portability for Servicemembers and Their Spouses

The Updated Law's Impact on Interstate Licensure Compacts

Some States are members of interstate licensure compacts, which allow licensed practitioners to work in other compact-member States without needing a new license or certificate. Under the prior version of the law, servicemembers or spouses that held a license to operate in multiple States pursuant to an interstate licensure compact were able to use SCRA license portability if they were moving to a State that was not covered by their compact.

Under the updated law, servicemembers or spouses who hold a covered license to operate in multiple States pursuant to an interstate compact are subject to the requirements of the compact or the applicable provisions of law in the new State and are no longer eligible for portability under the SCRA.¹²

Effective Date of the Updated Law

The SCRA's updated license portability provision, "Portability of Professional Licenses of Servicemembers and their Spouses," went into effect on December 23, 2024. Servicemembers and their spouses who, due to military orders, are in jurisdictions outside the State of the licensing authority that issued their covered license can now apply for portability.

Enforcement Authority for the Updated Law

Congress has provided the Attorney General with enforcement authority under the SCRA, which includes the provision regarding the portability of professional licenses and certificates. Specifically, this authority has been delegated to the Civil Rights Division, and authorizes lawsuits in federal district court against those who engage in (1) a pattern or practice of violations; or (2) violations that raise issues of significant public importance.¹³

The Civil Rights Division is proud of its work enforcing the SCRA and supporting servicemembers and their families. Since 2011, the Justice Department has obtained over \$483 million in monetary relief for over 148,000 servicemembers using the SCRA to address improper lease terminations, foreclosures, vehicle repossessions, interest rates, default judgments, and more.

Our Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative and our SCRA enforcement team engage regularly with State and local officials on the SCRA and other statutory protections afforded our servicemembers and their families. We welcome your continued engagement. We also appreciate your efforts to comply with this law and its recent changes, keeping in focus the goal of supporting our military families.

¹² See 50 U.S.C. § 4025a(e).

¹³ See 50 U.S.C. § 4041(a).

Update to Professional License Portability for Servicemembers and Their Spouses

Other Significant Updates

Background checks

A licensing authority that receives an application for portability under the SCRA may conduct a background check of the applicant before recognizing a covered license as valid or issuing a temporary license.¹⁴

Temporary licenses

If a licensing authority is required to consider a covered license valid under the SCRA but cannot carry out such requirement during the 30 days after receiving an application from a servicemember or spouse, the licensing authority may issue to the applicant a temporary license that confers the same rights, privileges, and responsibilities as a permanent license.¹⁵

Are any licenses excluded?

The term "license" means any license, certificate, or other evidence of qualification that an individual is required to obtain before the individual may engage in, or represent himself or herself to be a member of, a particular profession.¹⁶ Under the prior version of the law, licenses to practice law were explicitly excluded from portability under the SCRA. Under the updated law, all professional licenses and certificates, including law licenses, are eligible for portability.

Active use requirement

Under the prior version of the law, there was a requirement that the servicemember or spouse have actively used the covered license during the two years immediately preceding the move in order to be eligible for portability. Under the updated law, there is no longer any requirement that the license have been actively used.¹⁷ If the servicemember or spouse meets the requirements as detailed earlier in this letter, they qualify for portability under the SCRA.

Initial Conversations with Licensing Authorities

In our initial conversations with licensing authorities, we uncovered a few concerning trends. We strongly encourage you to train your public-facing staff about the SCRA. Servicemembers and their spouses report that they are deterred from applying for license portability because they are misdirected by frontline staff. Too often these applicants are sent to a generic renewal or application portal that does not include a pathway for SCRA license

¹⁴ See 50 U.S.C. § 4025a(d).

¹⁵ See 50 U.S.C. § 4025a(b).

¹⁶ See 50 U.S.C. § 4025a(f)(2).

¹⁷ See 50 U.S.C. § 4025a.

Update to Professional License Portability for Servicemembers and Their Spouses

portability. We have found that, even in cases where applicants ask explicitly about SCRA portability, they have been told that no such pathway exists.

As a reminder, following a State-mandated process for licensure does not ensure that you are in compliance with the SCRA. When a servicemember or spouse applies for SCRA license portability, anything demanded in excess of the requirements detailed in the SCRA is illegal. For example, the law does not permit requesting transcripts or test scores or meeting active use requirements. The goal of this provision is to recognize that an applicant servicemember or spouse is already fully licensed or certified by another licensing authority in the United States. They are not new applicants who have to meet the same requirements as first-time practitioners. The license portability provision of the SCRA provides its applicants with a unique pathway to continuing their career, different from someone who is relocating to a new State or jurisdiction voluntarily.

As a best practice, we recommend that state licensing authorities issue a new license to the servicemember or spouse who has applied for portability. In the alternative, the State licensing authority should provide the servicemember or spouse with documentation showing that their existing license is valid in the new jurisdiction. This proof of valid licensure can be electronic. This can help ease concerns from insurance providers or employers as the spouses seek employment in your State.

In the fight against military spouse unemployment, speedy processing of a SCRA license portability application can make a huge difference. We strongly encourage you to update your websites, portals, and public-facing materials to help applicants seeking a new license or recognition of their existing license or certificate under the SCRA.

Additional Resources

You can find additional information about the SCRA, professional licensure, and interstate licensure compacts through the following links:

- *Justice Department's Servicemembers & Veterans Initiative* – www.servicemembers.gov
- *Resource on Licenses Sponsored by the Department of Labor* – [License Finder | CareerOneStop](#)
- *Department of Defense Resource on Interstate Licensure Compacts & Other Issues* – [About Defense-State Liaison Office | Military State Policy \(militaryonesource.mil\)](#)

In addition, you can refer servicemembers and their families seeking information about their rights under this updated law (or any section of the SCRA) to the following resources:

- *Justice Department's Servicemembers & Veterans Initiative* – www.servicemembers.gov
- *Military Legal Assistance* – <http://legalassistance.law.af.mil/>

If servicemembers or their spouses are not eligible for military legal assistance services, they may request that the Justice Department review their claim by submitting a complaint through <https://civilrights.justice.gov/link/4025A>.

Update to Professional License Portability for Servicemembers and Their Spouses

Conclusion

The SCRA provides important legal protections for our military families who do so much for our country. We remain committed to easing the burdens that our military families face and hope that you will join us in the fight against military spouse unemployment. We greatly appreciate your assistance in safeguarding the rights of our Nation's servicemembers and their families.

Sincerely,



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U.S. Department of Justice