



Missouri House of Representatives

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Missouri House Passes Uniform Deployed Parents Custody and Visitation Act

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – The Missouri House has overwhelmingly approved HB 1494, known as the Uniform Deployed Parents Custody and Visitation Act. This pivotal legislation, sponsored by State Representative Dave Griffith, aims to address the unique challenges faced by military families in custody and visitation matters when a parent is deployed for military service.

The Uniform Deployed Parents Custody and Visitation Act establishes comprehensive guidelines and procedures to ensure the best interests of the child are upheld while providing clarity and support to deploying parents and their families.

Key provisions of the legislation include:

- **Notification Requirements:** Deploying parents must notify the other parent of pending deployment within a specified timeframe, unless prevented by service circumstances. Both parents are mandated to provide a plan for custodial responsibilities during deployment promptly.
- **Protection of Deployed Parents:** The bill ensures that a parent's past or potential future deployment alone cannot be considered in determining the best interests of the child, safeguarding deployed parents' rights in custody proceedings.
- **Temporary Custodial Agreements:** Parents are empowered to enter into temporary agreements granting custodial responsibilities during deployment, with provisions for enforcement and termination outlined in the legislation.
- **Court Procedures:** Clear procedures are established for filing motions, modifying, or terminating temporary custodial agreements, providing a framework for efficient resolution of custody matters.
- **Electronic Signatures and Notices:** The bill modernizes procedures for electronic delivery of notices while preserving the validity of existing court orders concerning custodial responsibility during deployment.

The passage of HB 1494 represents a significant step forward in supporting military families and ensuring their rights and interests are protected during periods of deployment. By providing clear guidelines and procedures, this legislation offers much-needed certainty and support to families navigating the complexities of custody and visitation arrangements amidst military service obligations.

"As a former service member myself, I understand firsthand the difficulties military families encounter during deployments," Griffith, R-Jefferson City, said. "This legislation is a crucial step in ensuring that the best interests of children remain a priority while providing clarity and support to deploying parents and their families."

With an unanimous vote of 153-0, the bill now moves to the Missouri Senate for consideration. If passed into law, the Uniform Deployed Parents Custody and Visitation Act would serve as a model for other states, demonstrating Missouri's commitment to supporting military families and upholding the best interests of children.

Representative Dave Griffith, a Republican, represents Cole County (District 60) in the Missouri House of Representatives. He was elected to his first two-year term in November 2018. For more information, please contact Rep. Griffith's office at 573-751-2412 or via email at Dave.Griffith@House.Mo.Gov.

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