

STATEHOUSE - While some new Indiana laws from this past session have already gone into effect, the majority just went into effect July 1. It is important that everyone know what changes our state is making, which is why this will be part one of a four-part series of columns discussing new Indiana laws.

This week our nation celebrates its independence. Since our nation's founding, countless brave men and women have courageously fought for the freedoms we exercise today. Their selfless acts deserve the utmost respect, and, every day, deserve our recognition. With that in mind, the Legislature stood with our veterans by enacting the following legislation:

House Enrolled Act 1059 – Military Family Relief Fund

This law extends the application deadline for grants from the Military Family Relief Fund from one year to three years. Grant monies can be used to help pay for food, housing, utilities, medical services, basic transportation, child care, education, employment or workforce, and other essential family support expenses. The grant is available for a service member or a service member's family and is funded by the sales of "Hoosier Veteran", "POW-MIA" and "Support Our Troops" license plates.

I supported HEA 1059 because it is important to show our veterans that we support them when they return home. It can be difficult for our veterans to adjust to civilian life when returning from war, and I want to do everything I can to make their return a smooth transition.

House Enrolled Act 1116 – Military Education & Training

This law requires all state educational institutions to adopt a policy to award educational credit to someone who enrolls in a state educational institution and successfully completes courses that are part of their military service; meets the standards of the American Council on Education (ACE); and meet the state educational institution's role, scope and mission.

Too often, soldiers will complete courses as part of their military training but will be unable to receive educational credit at an institution they are enrolled at. I supported this legislation because it will help our soldiers receive their college degree in a timely matter which will also help them save money.

House Enrolled Act 1065 – Military Custody & Parenting Time Matters

Servicemen and women facing divorce and child custody proceedings at the time of their deployment are often unable to attend or set a hearing because of their military duties. This new law allows an expedited hearing in determining child custody and also allows the servicemen or women to delegate their parenting time to a person who has a close and substantial relationship with the child; as long as the court determines it is in the child's best interest.

I supported HEA 1065 because it will provide parents in the military with the flexibility they need to make the best arrangements for their child's care while they are away on duty, while also ensuring the best interests of the child are being met.

I will continue to advocate for our servicemen and women throughout my tenure as your state representative. Next week I will discuss new Indiana laws regarding public health, including details on the statewide smoking ban. For a complete list of new Indiana laws, visit <http://www.in.gov/legislative/reports/2012/2012GOV.PDF>. As always, please feel free to contact me with any questions, concerns or input by calling 317-232-9509 or emailing H73@in.gov.

Rep. Davisson represents parts of Clark, Crawford, Dubois, Harrison, Jackson, Perry, Scott and Washington Counties.

