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# The Gig Economy and Military Spouses: How a Fringe Demographic of Workers Can Finally Get the Jobs They Deserve

A valuable but neglected resource in our country are the unemployed husbands and wives of those serving in the U.S. military. The emerging “gig” economy promises to make a difference and my firm is trying to help.

The gig economy is already changing how all of us live. With Uber, Handy, PostMates, and more, consumers are embracing the ability to get a ride, schedule a home cleaning, receive a hand-delivery on demand. The gig economy is also driving a revolution within the traditional workplace as well. My company is an example. Bliss Lawyers, which I co-founded in 2011, draws upon a network of over 20,000 lawyers across the US to provide top lawyers for temporary engagements supporting Fortune 1,000 companies and law firms. From project-based work to remote counsel, our clients engage Bliss Lawyers for a broad mix of work, from negotiating sophisticated business transactions to handling day-to-day employment law matters and everything in between, and for periods as short as one month to as long as five years.

Bliss is always looking for new lawyers to join our team and bring new skills to our clients. And we have discovered an important untapped resource—the legally trained spouses of active-duty U.S. military personnel.

The husbands and wives of military personnel are devoted, supportive and patriotic. They are also necessarily nomadic as they follow their spouses from base to base, from assignment to assignment. This, especially in the old economy, took a toll on their ability to practice a profession or hold a job. Many have given up their own careers to support a family decision to serve their country. Of the nearly 650,000 military spouses, a staggering 90% are either unemployed or underemployed, of which a full 26% are currently unemployed, according to Military Spouse JD Network (MSJDN), a niche non-profit organization.

Among those who face an especially difficult situation are military spouses who are lawyers, thanks to historic hard-line position that state bar associations have taken, requiring a new bar license in every state in

which a lawyer would like to practice. According to MSJDN, hundreds of military spouses have trained for and taken a bar examinations up to four separate times in an uphill battle to create a portable career in the law.

What can be done to reduce these obstacles? Since 2012, MSJDN has worked tirelessly, state-by-state, to win exceptions for military spouses to these antiquated licensing requirements. As of this writing, 27 states now allow for military spouses to work in their new home state using interstate bar licenses, with Connecticut the most recent to amend its legislation in July of 2017.

In a further effort to combat this issue, Bliss Lawyers is now partnering with MSDJN to help create job opportunities for this talented and under-appreciated pool of attorneys. We are making a specific effort to engage military spouses as part of our client offerings. As we bring this demographic of qualified lawyers to the attention of America's biggest companies, CEOs and their legal department are raising their hands to help out. Both sides benefit from this exchange.

A study from LinkedIn suggests that, by 2020, 43% of the U.S. workforce will be freelancers. Hidden among this burgeoning slice of the workforce are today's unemployed military spouses. Being a military spouse presents a sacrifice: With 79% of military families relocating at least once in the past five years, spouses often have to make an agonizing choice between career and family obligation. Enter the flexible work environment. The gig economy promises have a huge positive impact on this underutilized employee population, even outside the field of law. And it will help boost our economy even as it eases the economic burden on those who serve.

I am not from a military family and I have not had the privilege of serving. But I have a deep gratitude for those who do. Hiring military spouses—and participating in this new culture of work—is an opportunity for individuals and corporations to support military families. And to the extent that regulatory barriers stand in the way, it is also an opportunity for states to show their support by removing obstacles to employment for this highly-motivated pool of nomadic workers.