



Homefront Rising

**A Military Spouse's Guide
to Running for Office**

By Elizabeth Jamison



The mission of this guide is to empower military spouses to seek out and serve in leadership roles in public service to make positive changes, not only for military families, but for our broader communities and our country. Over the years, military spouses have become adept at calling on Congress and our elected officials to demand that they meet the needs of those who serve in uniform and the families serving alongside them. But we also need members of our own community among the elected officials making decisions that affect us in the military community and beyond. We no longer want military spouses to only “call your representative” when a problem arises. Instead, military spouses will *be* the representatives! This guide aims to equip military spouses to take the skills developed through supporting the homefront to serve in leadership roles in Congress, state houses, and city halls across this country. While it does not address every topic that will arise, it is designed to supplement existing resources by speaking to key issues and providing resources for military spouse candidates.

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Resource Guide

Chapter 1: Why You are Uniquely Positioned to Serve

If you are reading this guide, you probably already know in your heart that military spouses are uniquely positioned to run for office. In case you need a reminder: yes, YOU, the military spouse reading this, are qualified, competent, and capable of serving in a leadership role in our government! You don't have to wait for that next degree or job promotion, or until after your next move, or to be nominated by someone else. Simply by picking up this guide, your leadership journey to public office has already begun.

Like our spouses in uniform, military spouses are a diverse community - service-oriented, and skilled at solving problems with limited resources. Although frequent military moves are an obstacle to geographic stability for active duty families, there are many military spouse qualities which make for excellent candidates:

- Military families have strong personal and social media networks spanning multiple states.
- Living in multiple locations gives military spouses valuable insight on different approaches to education, employment, social services, and other community needs.
- On average, military spouses have more formal education than their civilian counterparts.
- Military spouses intimately understand the consequences of U.S. foreign policy.
- Military families are uniquely impacted by federal decision-making and budget processes affecting Department of Defense (DoD) pay, retirement, healthcare, child care, schools, and more.
- The military spouse narrative, although it does not involve service in uniform, conveys to the public a story of commitment and sacrifice.

Military spouses have a long history of calling upon elected officials to meet the needs of servicemembers and military families. In 1969, the National Military Families Association was founded by a handful of military wives who wanted to make sure their widowed friends were properly cared for. Two years later, the Survivor Benefit Plan became law, providing an option for a continuous lifetime annuity for dependents of retirees. This story has been repeated over and over again on issues from military spouse employment to supporting military caregivers to resources for Gold Star families.

While military spouses are powerful advocates, the number of military spouses in elected office is miniscule. Nikki Haley, former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, was governor of South Carolina while her husband served in the state's National Guard. Former Senator Kelly Ayotte and current Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers are married to former Naval aviators. Army veteran spouse Jocelyn Benson was elected as Michigan's Secretary of State in 2018. Representative Pete Strauber, elected to the 116th Congress, is married to an Iraq War veteran. Others serve at various levels of government across the country. Although this community is service-oriented, it is extremely rare to find an active duty military spouse serving in an elected role. Many run for office after the servicemember separates from the military, which explains in part why the number of veteran spouses is higher than active duty military spouses in office. The Homefront Rising initiative aims to increase the number of military spouses in office, including active duty family voices.

Military families and our greater communities would be well-served by increased numbers of military spouses running for office, inclusive of those in the active duty,

Reserve, Guard, and veteran communities. As a group comprised of approximately 91 percent women, increased military spouse representation would also assist in achieving gender parity in elected positions.



Stepping into your service

It's okay to be scared at the prospect of running for office. Running for office is hard. But you've done harder. You've conquered relocations, buying a house sight unseen, finding new friends, job hunting, re-enrolling in schools, long nights of uncertainty during deployments, and so much more. So while it's okay to be overwhelmed at the thought, please do not let that stop your candidacy. Our country needs people like you to step up to serve, now more than ever.

Whether this is something you've wanted to do since running for high school student council or something you have only recently considered, it doesn't matter. Homefront Rising is here to support you as you pursue elected office. We need you. We believe in you.

How does it feel to be nominated?

Use this space to acknowledge any fears and feelings or start organizing!

Chapter 2: Ready to Run

Did you know that there are over 500,000 positions that you can run for in the United States? We tend to think about Congress when we talk about running for office, but that is a tiny sliver of the offices available as a candidate; there are school boards, city leadership, county governments, state legislative and executive positions, and so much more. So where do you start as a military spouse looking to serve? If you already know when and where you plan to run, you can skip this chapter. But if you need help thinking through the right position and the right time, this chapter is for you.

We know that active duty military families move on average every two to three years based upon the needs of the DoD. Before running, you must decide whether to do so while still subject to Permanent Changes of Station (PCSes) or to wait until your active duty spouse leaves active duty. Reserve and National Guard spouses face similar decisions when factoring in potential deployments or relocations to advance a servicemember's career. For a military spouse looking to build community ties in advance of a campaign, frequent relocations are a challenge to establishing a presence leading up to a run for office. While they are a challenge, they should not be a complete barrier. Military spouses are masters of social media networking and mobilizing new friends, so get ready to activate those skills as part of your effort.

Whether you run while your servicemember is still on active duty or wait until after separation from the service, it is critical to build a support system in advance of launching a campaign. Military spouses have an advantage over many others in this regard, with the ability to build a large network across multiple locations. While contacts

in jurisdictions outside of the electoral district cannot vote for you, they can donate! So don't wait - start collecting names and contact information now with something as simple as a spreadsheet or a Mailchimp account. Social media is a useful tool for military families to remain connected, even after a PCS. Consider a LinkedIn account to maintain professional contacts as well as Facebook or Instagram for more personal interactions. If recognized with an honorary title (*e.g.*, Military Spouse of the Year) or appointed to a board or commission (more on that later!), think about establishing a Facebook public figure page that can be converted for campaign purposes.

While timing is a consideration, do not let a possible future move stop you from running. We all know military families who thought they were PCSing, only to end up at one duty station for 10 years. Plenty of military families also establish a geographic base for the family while the servicemember continues to relocate (also known as "geo-batching"). There is nothing stopping you from serving on a school board or city council for a year or two or even from running for Congress during a tour of duty. A single term in the House of Representatives is two years and military spouses know more than most how much can change in a two-year period.

As for any potential candidate, timing plays a significant role in deciding when and where to run. As a future candidate, you should be monitoring when different seats open and who else is running for those seats. While you are not beholden to them, your local party leaders can help you figure this out. Military spouses must think about their experience (both paid and volunteer), the issues which matter the most to them and their community, and the time commitment required when deciding when to run and at

which level (local, state, or federal). Thinking about why you are running can also help you with the when and where:

<p>What are the top three issues that you are passionate about or want to fix?</p> <p><i>For example: I am passionate about education because I have seen what works and what doesn't work in four different school districts.</i></p>	<p>1)</p> <p>2)</p> <p>3)</p>
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Identifying what you care about and why you want to run can help narrow down the 500,000 opportunities that are out there. For example, if you care about defense policy or foreign affairs, a seat in Congress will afford you more opportunities to address those issues. But if you are passionate about parks and recreation, then running for city council or the parks oversight board makes more sense. Ultimately, you want to find a good match between the problems you want to fix and the office you decide to pursue.

You must also research applicable election and residency laws, the history of previous elections, and how much money previous candidates raised. Some seats will require you to live in the district, but not all have that requirement. Some will require that you live in the jurisdiction for a certain period before running, but again, not every seat requires a minimum time in the area before you can run.

Fundraising is also a consideration. Some smaller seats will not require much fundraising, but other seats (even some local races) can require significant fundraising time and effort. Thinking through these challenges and opportunities will help further narrow down the right race for you. And don't be afraid to start small - your first foray

into politics might be a run for the Senate, but many candidates serve in various capacities big and small throughout their public service journey.

There is a lot to consider when deciding when and where to run. It is not a decision to make lightly. But there is a position out there that makes sense for you! You may spend several years planning for a run or you might wake up one day at a new duty station and decide that now is your time. There is no “one way” to do it - you must do what works for you. So after thinking through the factors discussed in this chapter, take a few minutes to mark the positions that you want to research further (it’s okay to choose more than one):

- Local Services (library board, park department, sanitation district, etc.)**
- School Board**
- Municipal Government (mayor, city council, zoning or health boards, etc.)**
- County Office (supervisors, district attorney, tax collector, etc.)**
- State Boards**
- State Legislature (House or Senate)**
- State Executive Offices (Attorney General, Secretary of State, Governor, etc.)**
- Federal Legislature (U.S. House or Senate)**
- Federal Executive Offices (President or Vice President)**

One of these offices is just waiting for you to step up and run. This guide includes further discussion on making a run for office work with the other demands in your life. After those discussions, you may come back to this and rethink what positions make sense for you, but it’s never too early to start considering the possibilities and doing your research on which position to pursue.

Chapter 3: Sharing Your Story of Service

Now that you have been nominated to run and narrowed down the position that is the best fit for you, it's time to share that good news with others! So how do you let people know? It doesn't have to involve the media and microphones (that will come later). But you should start saying it out loud. Repeat after me: "I am going to run for office." The next step is to say it to someone else. Start with your family and friends, let them know that you are planning on running for office, and ask them to be your first supporters. You aren't looking for donations at this point, just moral support as you move forward with your plan.

Who are you going to call first to share the news that you are running for office?	1) 2) 3)
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As you start sharing your plans with others, consider tracking your outreach. Are people's reactions positive? How are you telling your story? What is making an impact with others? Collecting this information and evaluating the feedback you receive will help you begin to craft your campaign message.

There is already a wealth of information available when it comes to campaign communications, so this guide will not attempt to go into depth on this topic. We highly recommend a [Veterans Campaign](#) candidate workshop or utilizing the other groups included in the Resource Guide at the end of these chapters to help you fully develop a

campaign communications plan. However, it is important to think about how your campaign messaging will incorporate your military spouse story, as well as other parts of your identity. Veterans running for office are told that military service alone is not enough to propel a campaign to victory. Likewise, military spouses cannot rely solely on a narrative based solely on a role as a military family member. This guide focuses on your military spouse experience, but that isn't the only story you have to tell. It is important to think about the other pieces of your identity and how they have played a role in shaping your life and your views, as well as how those identities intersect and how they may impact your campaign narrative. To help think through this, take two minutes to list as many of your identities as you can. Examples are included below, but the list is not exclusive.

<u>Examples</u>	<u>You</u>
Gender	
Sex	
Sexual Orientation	
Race	
Ethnicity	
Socioeconomic Status	
Occupation	
Marital Status	
Parenting Status	
Religion/Spiritual Affiliation	
Geographic Affiliation	
Other	

Once you have a list, ask yourself how hard or easy it was to come up with these identities? Are some more important to you than others? How do these identities intersect with your military spouse experience? Will you address these identities in your campaign messaging and, if so, how will you do so?

As you move forward with your candidacy, consider your experiences and expertise gained as a military spouse as well as your other positions and identities and how those relate to the issues that are relevant to your community. For example, if you are running for a school board position, talk about your experiences enrolling your children in different schools as you moved around to different duty stations, what was good or bad about those districts, and how it helped shape your approach to education policy. If you have struggled with navigating the TRICARE system, you can talk about those issues as a segue into a healthcare discussion. It is easier to start talking about things that are familiar to you, and your role as a military spouse is probably part of that comfort zone. But don't stop there - you have to take those experiences and apply them to your community and your future constituents. Voters want to know who you are, but they also want to know that you care about the problems they are facing and have a plan to address those problems. It is critical to craft a campaign message that not only captures your military spouse narrative but also the needs of your district.

One piece of advice from 2018 Congressional candidate and Air Force spouse Tatiana Matta is for military spouse candidates to be prepared for the media and the public to talk about your spouse's service in uniform first and your accomplishments and goals second. You must have a strategy in mind to open with your story of service as a

military family because it is a powerful tool to garner recognition and establish your credentials. However, you should also have a narrative ready to quickly shift the conversation to the issues that matter in the campaign and the community. A sound bite might only give you seconds to get your message across, and you don't want the entire focus on your servicemember's story rather than your candidacy. Practice and master your "pivot" from being proud to support your servicemember in uniform to being proud of your community and how you will serve it.

A frequent communications concern heard from military spouses is how to address allegations that they are not originally from a district or haven't been there long enough to represent its constituency. Veterans face similar issues when running in a new location after years of service around the globe. Look no further than the [carpetbagging accusations made against Amy McGrath in the 2018 Congressional race](#). The good news is that these types of attacks frequently backfire ([as they did for the candidate who attacked Amy McGrath](#)). While you absolutely must build meaningful community ties before running, do not let the carpetbagging concern stop you from engaging and running for office in your new home. Most citizens understand and appreciate that you are committing to a location as your new home, particularly if you had the option to go elsewhere.

For a solid example of a response to this type of allegation, see the statement from Allison Russo, a military spouse elected to the Ohio House of Representatives in 2018, after another candidate jabbed at her residency and history of public service. While speaking out on a misleading mailer, her opponent made sure to point out that

candidate Russo was not a resident of Ohio nor involved in public service during the period in question. Representative Russo responded as follows:



STATEMENT FROM ALLISON RUSSO ON FALSE ADVERTISING IN HER RACE

October 11, 2018

I'm glad that Erik Yassenoff called out the lies in the Ohio Republican Party's recent advertising. Candidates should certainly be held accountable for their voting record, but what ORP had in their mailer about my record was pure fiction. Mr. Yassenoff and I agree that alternative facts and falsehoods have no place in our campaign.

Sadly, the ORP also has a long history of diminishing the experiences of women who run for public office, which is why I am deeply disappointed that Mr. Yassenoff used his statement calling for "civility" as an opportunity to both call out my Ohio residency and belittle my history of public service. What Mr. Yassenoff failed to acknowledge is that I am married to a combat veteran and a former federal law enforcement officer. While my husband was active duty, this meant multiple assignments and moves for our family to North Carolina, Germany, Delaware, and, later, the Washington, D.C. area, where, as a civilian, he worked in the U.S. Intelligence community on counter-terrorism operations. Once my husband finished serving his country in those capacities, we chose to settle in this district to raise our family.

I would also remind Mr. Yassenoff that public service is not limited to holding political office or political appointment. While my husband was repeatedly deployed overseas and I was raising our two oldest children, I was also working on the healthcare needs of our men and women in uniform. I have spent nearly 20 years working with the Department of Defense's Military Health System and TRICARE program. My history as a military spouse and health policy expert has deeply shaped my approach to public service and public policy. Mr. Yassenoff's statement shows a profound disconnect from both non-political forms of public service and the sacrifices made by Ohio's veterans and military families every day. I understand that it can be difficult to grasp the depth of these sacrifices and challenges if you have never directly experienced them, but those are exactly the types of biases and misperceptions that I hope to address in the Ohio House.

Until then, I will continue to focus on my own campaign, talking to voters about the issues that people in this district care about - affordable health care, job creation, and a good education for every family in our state.

As demonstrated by Representative Russo, your story and your voice as a military spouse are powerful. Authenticity is also key to your campaign messaging, so you should not ignore the factors that have affected you and your life, whether that is being a military spouse, a parent, a cancer survivor, a teacher, an advocate, or another impactful identity. Tap into these narratives to help you describe to others how your life experiences have shaped your worldview, developed you as a leader, and informed your vision for the future of your community and our country. A good example of authentic military spouse storytelling on the campaign trail is the [launch video](#) from 2020 Congressional candidate and Army spouse Lindsay Simmons. She weaves in the story of her husband’s deployment, her pregnancy, and her advocacy for military spouses as she establishes her credentials on domestic and foreign policy and makes the case to distinguish herself from the district’s current representation.

It is never too early to start practicing your pitch as a candidate. Think about what you wrote down in the last chapter when you answered what you are passionate about or what you want to fix by running for office. The first time feels like a lot of pressure, but you will continue to refine your messaging throughout your campaign, so it does not have to be perfect. Even if you don’t know the specific position, you can start now by saying “My name is _____ and I’m running for office because

Now you are ready to call the three people you listed at the beginning of this chapter and tell them about your plan and why you are running for office. Start dialing!

Chapter 4: Running In Real Life

Running for office takes time. There is no escaping that truth. After reading that, you are probably thinking about how you will make it work with your current obligations, which might include work, child care, managing a household, volunteering, spending time with family and friends, and taking care of yourself. Add in your servicemember's training and deployment schedule on top of everything else! It can feel overwhelming.

Military spouses are planners, and we want to know *how much time do I have to set aside to run for office?* Unfortunately, there is no one answer to this question. The reality is that running for office is time-consuming. You are responsible for fundraising, reaching out to voters, attending events, building community connections, talking to the media, and more. You do not have to do it alone, but ultimately, you are the candidate and your time will be the most important commodity during your campaign.

Exactly how much time your campaign requires depends largely on what race you enter. An uncontested seat on the local neighborhood council will not demand the same from you as a congressional race. For many positions, you can find previous fundraising numbers online to get a sense of what you will have to raise and how much time and effort that might take. Think about the size of your district - will you have to travel a lot to cover the entire area and connect with constituents in all corners? It is a good idea to reach out to someone who held the position in the past or recently ran for the seat. If they are open to sharing, ask them about how much money they raised, how much they traveled, how much time it took, and any other lessons they learned from their campaign experience.

As you prepare to run, it is also helpful to have a family conversation about balancing a campaign and family obligations. Will training and deployment schedules interfere with child care needs? Are there friends and family nearby to help with the campaign or child care? Can you afford to outsource chores to free up your time? Will you continue working or can the family afford to lose your income during the campaign? Be honest with yourself and your family about the time you will dedicate to your campaign and what that will mean from a personal perspective.

In 2018, the Federal Election Commission (FEC) ruled that federal candidates can use campaign funds to pay for child care costs related to running for office. To date, eight states, including New York, Louisiana, and Kentucky, have ruled similarly for state-level candidates. State House candidate Caitlin Clarkson Pereira made headlines after the Connecticut State Elections Enforcement Commission ruled that she could use privately raised campaign funds, but not public funds from Connecticut's Citizens' Election Program for child care. She is appealing that ruling, with support from the Lieutenant Governor. Be sure to explore all the options available to you in your jurisdiction to support you on the campaign trail.

Military spouse candidates also shouldn't discount the military community when it comes to supporting a fellow spouse. Don't be afraid to ask for help with child care, running errands, stuffing envelopes, or whatever else you need, but be honest about the financial, family, and military obligations that will weigh against the needs of your campaign.

Before you move on to the next chapter, take a few minutes to think about how you will balance your time to run for office.

What are two activities that you could give up or outsource?	What are two activities that you cannot give up or outsource?
<i>(examples: volunteering or cleaning the house)</i>	<i>(examples: exercise or breakfast with family)</i>
1)	1)
2)	2)

While we want you to put your plan to run into action as soon as you put down this guide, we also understand that the timing isn't always right. Even if you decide not to run at your current duty station, don't let that time go to waste. You can still build your credentials, grow your network, and prepare to run at a later date. Seek out boards or appointments that coincide with the length of your servicemember's tour (see Chapter 8). If you find yourself at a remote location or overseas, don't discount the value of volunteer service. Some organizations like the Junior League are specifically designed to give women leadership experience to take out into the community. Organizing the Family Readiness Group (FRG) or working with the Parent Teacher Association also develop and demonstrate leadership and problem-solving skills. Keep working on your plan to run and put it into action when the time is right.

Chapter 5: Building Your Team

One of the most important pieces of knowledge to take away from this guide is that you don't have to run for office alone. In fact, you absolutely *should not* do it alone! Military spouses are frequently self-sufficient as a result of spending so much time without our servicemembers. That independence is an asset when you have to figure out how to move cross-country while your spouse is deployed or handle solo parenting due to training schedules. When it comes to a campaign, you can't know everything and be everywhere and do it all yourself. Although you are putting yourself out there as the candidate and ultimately answering for your campaign as an individual, running for office is a team sport. You might not know it yet, but there are plenty of people eager to give of their time and money to elect good people in their communities.

Your campaign team should include people who are working for the campaign, campaign volunteers, future voters, friends and emotional supporters, and your family. How to structure your campaign is an important item to research and discuss with past candidates to determine how they distributed their campaign staff and resources. Local party leaders can also help you build a team and deploy your personnel. You don't need to have a massive network or be an extreme extrovert to run for office, but you must be able to build a community to support you through the peaks and valleys of your race. From watching your kids to making campaign calls to hosting events, you will come to rely on extra hands in order to be successful. Don't try to do it all yourself or you will burn out and that's not good for you, your supporters, or your future constituents.

The structure of your campaign and size of your paid and volunteer staff will depend on the position you are pursuing. If you are running a statewide race, much of your initial fundraising will go towards hiring a large team to support you. For a more local campaign, you may have only a few paid staff members, if any. Every campaign relies heavily on volunteer power, something military spouses are often familiar with after years of organizing family support groups and advocacy efforts. Your experience with volunteers will be a huge asset to you as a candidate.

So where do you start? A campaign manager is typically the first official member of your team. This position oversees the daily operations of your campaign and you will interact with them regularly. The campaign manager should be someone you like and trust to get the job done. They should be able to tell you what you need to hear, even if it is bad news. It's an important role that sets the foundation for the rest of your campaign, so be thoughtful about the selection and don't go with someone just because of the local party or a consultant - make sure it's a good fit for you. The last thing you want during a stressful race is an awkward relationship with your campaign manager, so find someone who communicates well with you. Once you have a campaign manager, they will help with selection of a finance manager, communications director, field team, consultants, volunteers, etc.

There are many trainings and resources available that provide more detail on building your team and deploying your staff efficiently during your campaign (see the Resource Guide at the end for suggestions). The goal of this guide is to focus on your strengths as a military spouse, which include your network. Don't overlook the

significance of your military community network as you build your campaign team. Time after time, campaign experts have told Homefront Rising attendees that this is an advantage over many candidates who may have strong, but small local networks. The scope of military spouse networks across the country and even the globe is a positive. Although you will hire staff and utilize volunteers in the district or state where you are running for office, your broader network is important to leverage as well, especially in this digital age that allows people to participate from afar through phone/text banking, email, and social media.

Think about the people in your network, near and far: fellow military spouses, friends from previous duty stations, or connections made volunteering with other campaigns or community organizations. Consider their skills and how they may best support you as you launch your candidacy. Maybe you know a military spouse graphic designer who can create your campaign logo or a social media wizard who can set up your campaign accounts. Don't be shy about asking for help! If you do make a request, be specific. A tailored request is more likely to be successful than a vague call for general assistance.

DON'T	DO
Avoid your military spouse network because "politics are taboo"	Talk to your friends and military spouses in a respectful way about why you are running and could use their help
Refuse to ask for help	Share paid and volunteer opportunities with your network
"Vaguebook" about needing help	Message a trusted friend and ask if they will volunteer as your social media manager or volunteer coordinator

Remember our suggestion earlier to start collecting names and contact information now, even if you don't plan on running right away? This is where that information comes in handy. Pull from that list or start that list here by coming up with 10 people you would ask for help when you start your campaign:

Name	Relationship	Contact Info	Campaign Ask
<i>Mary Smith</i>	<i>Fellow milspouse</i>	<i>email@gmail.com</i>	<i>Social media</i>

If you didn't start that spreadsheet or Mailchimp account when we talked about it in Chapter 2, make sure you get to work on it. Keep adding folks and use it to send holiday cards and change of address notifications until you are ready to run. Then tap into it to ask for volunteers, support, and donations. Speaking of donations, let's turn to the next chapter for the money talk.

Chapter 6: The Money Talk

One of the biggest concerns we hear involves fundraising. Military spouses have big networks, but we also know that many military families in our network are making ends meet on one income. While your network may lack wealth, having a large group of supportive folks across the country willing to donate any amount and vouch for you to others is a great advantage and expands your potential donor base. It can be scary and uncomfortable to ask for money from anyone, whether they are friends or strangers. This fear and the general lack of access to money is one of the biggest barriers for candidates, especially women. But please, don't let that stop you. Yes, you will have to ask for money. Over and over again. The first time is scary, but we promise it gets easier. Your team will help you. You can do it, and you might be surprised at how many people are willing to give, whether it's \$10 or \$1,000, in order to support good leaders.

As you know from previous chapters, every campaign is different! This means that the amount of money you need depends largely on what seat you are pursuing. In 2016, it cost about \$12 million to win an open Senate seat. An open House seat cost under \$2 million. If you are running against an incumbent, that amount likely increases. However, a local city council or school board seat might only take several thousand dollars. Start by doing your research to see how much previous candidates raised. You don't always have to fundraise the same amount as previous candidates or even your opponent. However, the amounts raised by others tell you a lot about the race, including whether an incumbent has a good base of support and how engaged your district is in your race. Good resources for this research include the FEC, state election boards,

[OpenSecrets.org](https://www.opensecrets.org), and [FollowtheMoney.com](https://www.followthemoney.com). Factors to research when figuring how much you will have to raise include:

- Are you running in a local, state, or federal election?
- How much did previous candidates raise?
- What are the campaign limits applicable to your race?
- Is public financing available to you?
- How much money do you think you can raise from your network?
- Are you known in the district or will you have to build name recognition?
- Are you running in an expensive media market?

There are plenty of resources and experts to help you navigate fundraising as a candidate. Attend a training (check out the many options in the Resource Guide), pay for advice from an experienced fundraiser, and don't try to do it alone. This guide will not go in-depth on what your individual campaign fundraising strategy should be, but we want you to know that you can do it. Military spouses have a fundraising advantage because of our diverse networks and should not be afraid to tap into those networks.

There are some issues to keep in mind when it comes to mixing the military and campaign finances. It is important for military families to be aware that active duty servicemembers can "make monetary contributions to a political organization, party, or committee favoring a particular candidate or slate of candidates" as permitted by [DoD Directive 1344.10](#). Active duty servicemembers can also attend partisan political fundraising activities, although they may not do so in uniform and must not give the appearance of official sponsorship, approval, or endorsement. Importantly, while a

servicemember can attend a political fundraiser, he/she cannot participate in fundraising activities or solicit political contributions from another person under the restrictions of [DoD Directive 1344.10](#). Military spouses are not subject to these limitations (but be aware that there may be applicable regulations from your own employer, particularly for federal employees governed by the Hatch Act). Military rules and regulations are discussed further in the next chapter.

Another important fundraising consideration relates to overseas relationships. This is particularly relevant for military spouses with broad networks that may include friends from duty stations in locations outside of the United States. Campaigns may not solicit or accept contributions from foreign nationals. Federal law prohibits contributions, donations, or expenditures made directly or indirectly by or from foreign nationals in connection with any federal, state, or local election. So by all means invite your U.S. citizen friends to support you with donations, but be sure to have a system in place to screen for contributions from foreign nationals, especially when your network may reach OCONUS (outside the continental United States).

Don't let the rules and regulations scare you away. It is possible to successfully fundraise for your campaign as a military spouse (just ask those who have gone before you!). Use the many resources available to you, including your military community network. Remember that you aren't raising money for yourself. Talk to folks about your plans to improve their lives when you win. People want to invest in good leaders and positive change for their communities. But they won't give unless you ask, so get ready to make that ask!

Chapter 7: Military Rules and Regulations

When running as a military spouse, you must familiarize yourself with the rules and regulations that govern servicemembers engaging in political activity, as well as restrictions on campaign activities on federal property. Although you are generally not subject to [DoD directives](#) as a family member, it is important to keep in mind the various restrictions on partisan activities for servicemembers as you form your campaign message and communications plan and start to engage in political activity as a candidate. You do not want to put your spouse or other servicemembers in positions that may cause them legal trouble or jeopardize their military careers. Additionally, your opponents will be looking for opportunities to point out mistakes to leverage against you, so be sure to understand the applicable regulations in order to protect yourself, your family, and your campaign.

Curious about how this all works in real life? 2020 Congressional candidate and Army spouse Lindsay Simmons discussed her experience of dealing with the military rules and regulations in an interview with the Secure Families Initiative ([available here](#)). In this interview, she describes how she notified her husband's chain of command before announcing her candidacy, worked with Judge Advocates to resolve the Army's concerns, and ultimately chose to hold herself to the same standards as an active duty servicemember whenever possible in order to reduce her husband's potential for pitfalls.

Every military spouse candidate must make the decision for their own campaign when it comes to applying DoD guidance, but it is critical to recognize the extensive prohibitions placed on the servicemember, especially those on active duty, including:

- participating in partisan fundraising activities;
- speaking at a partisan political gathering;
- wearing their uniform at a campaign or election event; and
- soliciting votes or advocating for a partisan party, candidate or cause, including on social media.

If your servicemember is still on active duty (rather than Reserve or Guard status), he or she is prohibited from even working behind the scenes on your campaign. The good news is that your servicemember can display a normal-sized campaign bumper sticker on his or her car!

One question that arises frequently for military spouse candidates involves the use of images of the servicemember in uniform (e.g., using a homecoming photo in your campaign materials). If you use images of your servicemember spouse in uniform or reference his/her rank, grade, and service affiliation, you must consult [DoD Directive 1344.10](#) and include an appropriate and prominently displayed disclaimer. The image must not be the “primary graphic representation” in any campaign materials. Your campaign is prohibited from giving the impression of official sponsorship, approval, or endorsement by the military.

Another issue to be aware of involves endorsements from the military community. Your campaign staff might push you to ask your network for endorsements of your candidacy, especially if you have connections to senior or well-known military leaders. While veterans and military spouses may freely give their endorsements, servicemembers still in uniform should not participate or imply an endorsement. They

cannot campaign on your behalf and should not be featured in your campaign materials in any way that highlights their uniform or military title.

Importantly, there are also restrictions that apply to you as a military spouse if you are running for office while living in base housing. You may not display partisan political signage visible to the public in military installation housing. Furthermore, candidates may not use installation or facilities for campaign activities. Arguably, this means that all your campaign planning and fundraising must take place away from your residence if it is on base. Election oversight entities like the FEC require a physical address for the campaign. Since many of your staff and volunteers will likely not have base access anyway, establishing an accessible office away from the installation may be the best solution.

The Candidate's Field Manual created by the Veterans Campaign contains a detailed chapter on "Avoiding Legal Pitfalls" that explores these issues in depth. If you have additional questions regarding DoD directives or restrictions on you or your servicemember, consider requesting an opinion from the base legal office or a private attorney with military law experience.

Chapter 8: Appointments and Other Opportunities to Serve

Not quite ready to run for office, but still interested in other ways to serve? Or maybe your timing isn't right at this duty station to run a full campaign? Never fear, there are plenty of other ways to serve and build your resumé for a future run.

As we discussed earlier, military spouses are already masters at organizing the FRG, serving as Ombudsman or Key Spouse, and helping their military community. These leadership and service opportunities have already prepared you to serve in other ways. The skills are entirely transferable to boards and commissions in your local community. These are generally non-partisan advisory or regulatory groups that work with various municipalities on a wide variety of issues, from parks and recreation to licensing to minority and women's issues. Serving on a board or commission can be a meaningful way to connect with your community while gaining new skills. Many boards and commissions are actively recruiting women, so this is a convenient pipeline for many military spouses. However, it is important to understand that such service is typically unpaid.

So how do you find these positions and which ones should you pursue? The process is similar to the earlier discussion on choosing an office if you plan to run. Start by doing your research. Just as with elected office, you will have to narrow down the existing opportunities to determine which makes the most sense for you based on your interests, experience, and skill set. Some jurisdictions publish a list of available positions or upcoming vacancies online for easy public access. Many also have board and commission coordinators who are on the lookout for interested candidates and hold

informational events and trainings for potential appointees. Don't be afraid to reach out to these coordinators to share your information and your availability. Specific expertise is not necessarily always required, but be sure to highlight any relevant skills (e.g. include your history of environmental education or volunteerism if you are applying for a parks position).

Attending a commission meeting, speaking with current or previous members, and reading through minutes and annual reports (if publicly available) are all good ways to help make the decision of what position is right for you. As with any professional opportunity, networking always helps. The more people who know that you are interested in serving on a board or commission, the more likely you are to be matched with an opportunity.

Typically, you will be required to submit an application, go through a screening process, be nominated, and eventually be confirmed to a board or commission seat. As you go through this process, it is not the time to be humble or downplay your abilities. Self-promotion can be difficult, especially for women who tend to discount their qualifications. Depending on the jurisdiction and the position, the appointment process can be competitive. Even if you feel underqualified, be confident in your experiences and what you bring to the table as a military spouse. Especially in communities surrounding military bases, your voice is important and, more than likely, underrepresented in these roles. So speak up, highlight your qualifications, and throw your hat in the ring!

Chapter 9: In Closing

What's a guide for military spouses without a checklist? Let's run through what you've learned:

I am uniquely positioned to serve in office.	
I don't have to wait to be nominated by someone else to run.	
I already know which office I will run for or I have the tools to decide which office makes the most sense for me.	
I'm nervous but I'm going to do it anyway.	
I've spoken with my family and done an inventory of my time.	
I know what I am passionate about or what I want to fix by running for office.	
I have my campaign pitch ready.	
I'm going to call three people to tell them that I am running.	
I'm prepared to tap into my network and build a team.	
I know I can fundraise even if it is uncomfortable at first.	
I am aware of the military's rules and regulations and understand how they apply to my campaign.	
I am ready to run!	

There is no doubt that military spouses are well-equipped to serve our communities in elected office. While a military spouse narrative does not guarantee victory, your story of service, commitment to country, and experiences with diverse and different communities set the foundation for a successful campaign and meaningful public service.

Resource Guide

#1 Reference Materials:

[The Candidate's Field Manual](#) from the Veterans Campaign

[Represent: The Woman's Guide to Running for Office & Changing the World](#) by June Diane Raphael and Kate Black

#2 Trainings and Resources:

- ***Military community***

Homefront Rising: Homefront Rising is a non-partisan initiative that encourages and trains military spouses to speak up and get involved in the political process through advocacy and public service. Programming includes an annual training conference and online resources.

www.msjdn.org/homefront-rising

Veterans Campaign: Veterans Campaign is a non-partisan organization whose mission is to encourage, mentor, and prepare veterans for a “second service” in civic leadership. Programming includes weekend workshops across the country to teach veterans, transitioning service members, and affiliates of the military community the foundational skills they need to run a successful campaign for elected office, issue advocacy, or civic initiatives.

www.veteranscampaign.org/

Master of Arts in Public Leadership: The MA in Public Leadership program is the result of a partnership between the University of San Francisco and Veterans Campaign. Designed

specifically for veterans and military families, the MA in Public Leadership is a 32-credit program designed to provide students the skills to succeed in public office, congressional affairs, campaign management, advocacy, and civic leadership. The hybrid curriculum combines online learning with five intensive weekend seminars. www.veteranscampaign.org/masters

- **General**

Run for Office: Run for Office is a free service that provides all the tools you need to launch a successful campaign whether you are a seasoned veteran or first-time campaigner. Run for Office allows you to: find the office you want to run for; get the information you need to appear on the ballot; learn how to run for office; get a free voter file; and launch your campaign.

- **Women (non-partisan)**

She Should Run: She Should Run is a nonpartisan nonprofit working to dramatically increase the number of women considering a run for public office. Programming includes an online community and incubator, virtual cohorts, and professional development series.

www.sheshouldrun.org/

Vote Run Lead: The mission of Vote Run Lead is to train barrier-breaking women to unleash their political power, run for office, and transform American democracy. Through an award-winning Run As You Are™ curriculum, women are encouraged to build campaigns based on their personal beliefs and values in order to serve the communities in which they live. www.voterunlead.org/

LBJ Women's Campaign School: The LBJ Women's Campaign School trains women to run for office or manage campaigns regardless of political party affiliation. They inspire women to enter the political arena, and empower them with the skills to win. <https://lbjwcs.lbj.utexas.edu/>

Ready to Run: Ready to Run is a national network of non-partisan campaign training programs committed to electing more women to public office.

https://cawp.rutgers.edu/education_training/ready_to_run/overview

The Campaign School at Yale: The Campaign School at Yale has one mission: increase the number and influence of women in elected and appointed offices in the United States and around the globe. They are a nonpartisan, issue-neutral political campaign-training program.

<https://tcsyale.org/>

- ***Partisan***

American Majority: American Majority is the nation's premier conservative training organization, helping put in place a truly unique, separate political infrastructure—for use before, during and after election dates. As a 501c(3) non-partisan, nonprofit, American Majority continually trains, organizes, mobilizes, and equips new grassroots conservative leaders.

<https://www.americanmajority.org/training/>

The Future Majority Project: The Republican State Leadership Committee's Future Majority Project (FMP) seeks to identify, recruit, train and support candidates who better reflect the full diversity of our nation. FMP has incorporated a 50-state strategy focused on recruiting candidates

of diverse backgrounds to run for state-level offices nationwide to ensure there would be a significant increase in Republican diverse elected officials at the state level.

www.rslc.gop/about_rslc/fmp/

Women's Public Leadership Network: The Women's Public Leadership Network provides center-right women with the knowledge and resources to make seeking public office and engaging in the political process more accessible. They are working from coast to coast to help women reach their goals. <https://womenspublicleadership.net/>

Emerge: The mission of Emerge is to increase the number of Democratic women in public office through recruitment, training and providing a powerful network. www.emergeamerica.org

- ***Appointments***

Ready to Serve: Ready to Serve is a centralized resource from the Partnership for Public Service that guides candidates through every step of the complex political appointment process for a federal position. <https://presidentialtransition.org/readytoserve/>

The Leadership Council for Women in National Security: LCWINS engages their robust networks to help organizations and political campaigns develop effective processes to identify, recruit, hire and retain talented women candidates for all appointed positions in national security.

<https://www.lcwins.org/>