



MILITARY FAMILY SUMMIT

**THE NATIONAL INFANTRY MUSEUM
1775 LEGACY WAY
COLUMBUS, GA 31903**

**HOSTED BY
CONGRESSMAN SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR
AND
CONGRESSWOMAN CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS**

Congressional Military Family Caucus: Military Family Summit

Welcome to the 2017 Congressional Military Family Caucus Summit!



For over two centuries, the United States Armed Forces have fought to defend our freedom and advance our national interests. It is a mission that requires dedication, not only from our service members, but their families as well. When a person joins the military, it is not just a job; it is a family commitment to our country.

That is why today, we are hosting our annual Military Family Summit to address the many challenges that impact our military families. The Military Family Summit brings federal agencies, advocates, Members of Congress, and most importantly, service members and their families together to find solutions to our nation's most pressing military family issues. Moreover, it provides an opportunity for us to recognize and thank our military families for all of the sacrifices they make so that our Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, and Airmen can perform their vital work.

This program is your guide to the agenda we have planned for the day. As you walk throughout the National Infantry Museum, you will find a number of organizations with information booths set up to showcase the many programs and initiatives they have designed to support military families and veterans.

We hope you will come away with a more profound sense of the challenges facing our military families and just how critical they are to the strength and security of our country.

We continue to marvel at the incredible courage and dedication of military families. As co-chairs of the Military Family Caucus, we are honored to be a part of this remarkable group of spouses, children, relatives, friends, and supporters. Thank you for all you do for our nation and for all you do to make the United States Military the best in the world.

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr. and Cathy McMorris Rodgers

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Military Family Summit

October 17, 2017

8:00 -8:30AM	Guest Registration	
8:30 -8:35AM Location: Heritage Hall	Summit Called To Order	Kenneth Cutts, District Director, Congressman Sanford D. Bishop, Jr. Pledge of Allegiance Presentation of Colors National Anthem Invocation
8:35 -8:40AM	Greetings	MG (Ret) Jerry White Fort Benning Color Guard MSG Olivia Singleton, GA National Guard Chaplain Myron Byles, Fort Benning Mayor Teresa Tomlinson Colonel Clinton W. Cox, Fort Benning Garrison Commander
8:40 -9:00AM	Statements of Occasion	Congressman Sanford D. Bishop, Jr Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers
9:00 -9:50AM	Keynote Remarks	Remarks Remarks Remarks General Lloyd Austin, U.S. Army (Retired) Joyce Raezer, National Military Association Major General Jeffrey Clark, Defense Health Agency
9:50 -10:50AM	Keynote Panel with Q&A	Moderator Sheila Stevens, Blue Star Families
10:50 -11:00AM	Recognition Presentation	Military Spouse April Stephens Military Family The Wentling Family
11:00 -11:15AM	Break	
11:15 -12:15PM Location: Patriot Hall A	Breakout Session I: *Military Spouse Employment and Child Education	Military Family Challenges Moderator: Mrs. Patty Barron, Director of Family Readiness, Association of U.S. Army
Location: Patriot Hall B	*Military Pay, Benefits, and Retirement	Moderator: Jeri Busch, Military Compensation Department of Defense
Location: Heritage Hall	*Military Family Healthcare and Childcare	Moderator: CAPT Edward Simmer, Defense Health Agency
12:15 -12:30PM	Break	
12:30 - 1:30PM Location: Patriot Hall A	Breakout Session II: *Hiring Military Spouses and educating our children	Military Family Solutions Moderator: Mrs. Brooke Goldberg, Military Officers Association of America
Location: Patriot Hall B	*Preserving Military Benefits	Moderator: Michael Reyna, Military Benefits Association
Location: Heritage Hall	*Reforming the Military Healthcare and Childcare Systems	Moderator: Kelly Hruska, National Military Family Association
End		

Congressional Military Caucus Recognition

Each year, the Congressional Military Family Caucus recognizes extraordinary individuals who, through their efforts and accomplishments, have made significant contributions on behalf of military families. As we honor this year's awardees, we are grateful for their sacrifices and appreciate their untiring efforts to the U.S. military and the communities they serve.



APRIL STEPHENS

Army Military Spouse

April Stephens' amazing show of compassion has profoundly encouraged military spouses across all services. April and her husband, U.S. Army Major Alan Stephens are proud parents of four young boys. In her free time, after homeschooling the boys, April is a successful professional blogger, well known for her blog series, Stories of our Four Boys. April describes her blog as, "Stories from a mom of 4 boys, to make you laugh and encourage you in your faith." April's personal story resonates with U.S. military households across the world. She was selected as the 2017 Fort Benning Military Spouse of the Year by Armed Forces Insurance.



THE MATTHEW WENTLING FAMILY

Army Military Family

The Wentling Family has immersed themselves in volunteerism during their entire time in the Army. The SGT Matthew, Marissa, Marisol, and Kaleb hit the ground running after arriving at Fort Benning in 2015 by establishing a local hub for Operation Homefront. The family's impact has stretched well beyond the defense community and has benefited child and youth services, The Columbus Lions, The Columbus Cottonmouths, Camp Corral, McBride Elementary and Faith Middle School, and many others. Most recently the family completed a school supply drive, and through their efforts, provided over 625 local military children with school supplies and backpacks for the 2017-2018 academic school year. The Wentling Family has inspired other military families to dedicate their time to serve as volunteers.

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KEYNOTE PANEL WITH Q & A: MILITARY FAMILY LIFE

Family readiness is measured by those who are prepared and equipped with the information and tools required to meet the demands of the military lifestyle. Educating, advising, and nurturing our military families is vital to the readiness of our armed forces. Whether it is regarding deployment support, compensation, benefits, or other quality of life issues across the military, this panel will dive into a practical discussion for the often-impractical world of military families. Drawing on real-world experiences, the panelists will provide personal stories and useful insights from the perspective of military families across the total force with the help of the audience.

Moderator: Mrs. Sheila Stevens, Blue Star Families

- Daniel and Holly Daily, Sergeant Major of the U.S. Army
- Ronald and Andrea Green, Sergeant Major of the U.S. Marine Corps
- Steven and Elka Giordano, Master Chief Petty Officer of the U.S. Navy

BREAKOUT SESSION I: MILITARY FAMILY CHALLENGES

Military Spouse Employment and Child Education

From the outside, military families appear to consist of stay-at-home spouses who keep house throughout deployments and care for the children. However, there is a flaw in this perception; military spouses increasingly seek their own careers to provide additional financial stability to their families and for personal career satisfaction. Nonetheless, military spouses who seek work account for high unemployment and underemployment rates. Although the majority of school-aged military children attend public schools, most public schools systems are not equipped to manage the stresses of military-connected children. Perhaps one of the most neglected populations in public education is military-connected students. This panel includes leading military family advocates who will discuss the many obstacles of spouse employment and child education for military families.

Moderator: Mrs. Patty Barron, Director of Family Readiness, Association of U.S. Army

- Mr. John Ballantyne, Chief Operating Officer, Military Child Education Coalition
- Mrs. Regina Brzak, Spouse of Fort Benning MCoE, CSM Scott A. Brzak
- Mrs. Brooke Goldberg, Director Military Family Issues/Spouse Programs, Military Officers Association of America

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Military Pay, Benefits, and Retirement

The cumulative effects of budgetary decisions over the past several years have impacted service members and their families. Adequate military compensation and benefits are necessary to build and sustain family readiness for our all-volunteer force. For example, the new blended retirement system fundamentally changes financial planning for military families. Furthermore, family readiness goes beyond active service members; our family commitment extends to survivors and veterans. Our total force readiness is better when members of our military are confident in their financial situation and well-being. This panel will discuss the importance of various benefit programs at the national, state, and local levels. In addition, panelists will highlight the many challenges facing military compensation and benefits.

Moderator: Mr. Jeri Busch, Director of Military Compensation, Department of Defense

- Mrs. Anna Crenshaw, Assistant Director, Benefits Assistance Services, Department of Veterans Affairs
- Senator Ed Harbison, Georgia State Senator
- Mr. Thomas Owens, Special Assistant to the Director, Defense Commissary Agency
- Mr. Michael Reyna, President, Military Benefit Association

Military Family Healthcare and Childcare

The Department of Defense is one of the largest healthcare and childcare providers in the world! The department is responsible for ensuring that all service members and their families have quality access to healthcare and childcare for everything from general health to more specialized healthcare necessities.

The lack of high-quality childcare access for military families not only impacts readiness, but it affects recruitment and retention. Thus, the military healthcare and childcare systems must align with the goals and needs of military families. The panelists will discuss the significant policy and operational challenges surrounding military medical care needs and the systems intended to meet those requirements and examine how healthcare and childcare could be expanded to cover the needs of military families and their children better.

Moderator: Captain Edward Simmer, Tricare Health Plan Office, Defense Health Agency

- Mrs. Kelly Hruska, Government Relations Director, National Military Family Association
- Mrs. Kara Tollet Oakley, Founder of the TRICARE for Kids Coalition
- Mrs. Leigh Plott, Director of Development, The Moyer Foundation
- Mrs. Cynthia Wesley, Fort Benning Military Spouse

BREAKOUT SESSION II: MILITARY FAMILY SOLUTIONS

Hiring our Spouses and Educating our Children

Deployments, frequent military-related moves, and changing family needs present challenges for military spouses to obtain, sustain, or advance a career. It is also essential that military-connected school children have equal academic opportunities despite the unique military lifestyle. This requires support from our national, state, and local educational systems. What policies can our governments implement to streamline or eliminate burdensome laws and processes that impact our professional spouses who want to work? What commitments can private employers make to embrace military spouses? How do we ensure that the childcare needs of military families are fulfilled? How should we reimagine the military child care system for the future? The panel will answer these questions and much more.

Moderator: Mrs. Brooke Goldberg, Director Military Family Issues/Spouse Programs, Military Officers Association of America

- Mr. John Ballantyne, Chief Operating Officer, Military Child Education Coalition
- Mrs. Patty Barron, Director of Family Readiness, Association of the U.S. Army
- Mrs. April Stephens, Fort Benning Military Spouse & Professional Blogger

Preserving Military Benefits

Military service requires extraordinary sacrifice from those serving and their families. The unique nature of military compensation and benefits play a key role in attracting high-quality people to serve a full career under demanding conditions that most civilians do not face. The recent fiscal and budgetary environment have forced Congress to relook at some benefits, causing uncertainty amongst members of the military. The panel will discuss actions that must be taken to preserve, protect, and enhance military compensation and benefits to support families.

- Moderator: Mr. Michael Reyna, President, Military Benefit Association
- Mrs. Anna Crenshaw, Assistant Director, Benefits Assistance Services, Department of Veterans Affairs
- Senator Ed Harbison, Georgia State Senator
- Mr. Thomas Owens, Special Assistant to the Director, Defense Commissary Agency
- Mr. Jeri Busch, Director of Military Compensation, Department of Defense

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Reforming the Military Healthcare and Childcare Systems

Any significant military healthcare and childcare reform must align with the unique challenges of service members and their families. New systems must make it easy for military members and their families to access health and childcare services to improve the quality of care. The path forward must include support from Congress, federal officials, and military support organizations. Panelists will discuss several areas in need of reform and recommend solutions on how to drive change.

Moderator: Kelly Hruska, Government Relations Director, National Military Family Association

- Captain Edward Simmer, Tricare Health Plan Office, Defense Health Agency
- Mrs. Kara Tollet Oakley, Founder of the TRICARE for Kids Coalition
- Mrs. Leigh Plott, Director of Development, The Moyer Foundation
- Mrs. Cynthia Wesley, Spouse of Fort Benning MCoE Commander, MG Eric J. Wesley

AVAILABLE INFORMATION BOOTHS

Army Community Service	National Military Family Association	Association of U.S Army	Resilience Training on Fort Benning	Retirement Services
Georgia Watch	Soldier for Life	Warrior Care	Military OneSource	Zero to Three
Heavy Equipment Colleges of America	Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System	Georgia Department of Labor	Neighbor Works Columbus	Blue Star Families
Military Child Education Association	Operation Caregiver	Army Substance Abuse Program	Veterans of Foreign Wars	America's VetDogs
West Georgia Cancer Coalition	Operation Homefront	Casualty Assistance Office	American Red Cross	Small Business Administration

The Congressional Military Family Caucus

We recognize that when a service member joins the military, it is not just a job – it is a family commitment to our country. The Congressional Military Family Caucus focuses on issues such as education, children, healthcare, spousal employment, and the effects of multiple deployments. Through educating Members of Congress, it is our hope that the Congressional Military Family Caucus will be able to develop legislation to better support our nation's military families

Congressman Sanford D. Bishop. Jr.

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