

Media Release

Billings Chamber Fighting for Legislation to Attract Veteran Workforce

For Immediate Release

Billings, Mont., February 1, 2023: Montana is experiencing a tremendously low 2.2% unemployment rate, and although this might seem like a good thing, businesses are struggling to find qualified workers in such a competitive job market. There is one demographic Montana is missing out on, however: retired Veterans. Arguably one of the nation's most well-trained workforce, Veterans are not flocking to Montana because we are one of three states (and the District of Columbia) that provides no special tax consideration for Veteran pension and currently fully taxes Veteran pensions as regular income.

The Billings Chamber of Commerce, along with Big Sky Economic Development, sees this as an opportunity of growth and change for Montana in its ability to attract and retain residents. "We want those who are retiring from the military to choose Montana for their home, to start businesses and be part of our workforce. Veterans have significant leadership and technical skills that add immense expertise to our workforce, and they share our Montanan values, we want them here" said Allison Corbyn, director of business recruitment and economic policy for Big Sky Economic Development.

In the Montana legislature there are currently two bills seeking to address this issue—one in the Senate (SB104) and one in the House (HB219). "While we would like to see an elimination of the tax on Veteran pensions entirely, both bills provide a good start, finally giving Montana a marketing pitch to retiring Veterans beyond our scenic beauty" said Dan Brooks, Billings Chamber's business advocacy director. "Vets are acutely aware of their benefits and want to keep as much as they can, rightly so. And after having lived all over the U.S., part of their relocation decision comes down to which state will let them keep their hard-earned retirement. These bills put Montana on the map for retiring Veterans looking for a final relocation after years of redeployment."

Last session a similar bill made it through the first chamber with strong support but couldn't quite make it past that next hurdle. Corbyn shared, "We hope this is the year the Montana Legislature will make a change, sending a bill to the Governor's desk that addresses our tremendous workforce demand by tapping into highly skilled Veterans ready to start their second career or a new business."

To learn more visit: www.BillingsChamber.com/public-policy.

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Catalyst. Convener. Champion. The Billings Chamber of Commerce represents our 1,150+ members who employ more than 45,000 people. We are a catalyst for business growth, a convener of leaders and influencers, and a champion for a thriving community.