

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 1506**

---

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

*Colleen M. Garry*

*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:*

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act relative to child custody when either parent is on active military duty.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Colleen M. Garry</i>	<i>36th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/10/2023</i>

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 1506**

By Representative Garry of Dracut, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 1506) of Colleen M. Garry relative to child custody when parents are on active military duty. The Judiciary.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION  
SEE HOUSE, NO. 1594 OF 2021-2022.]

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court  
(2023-2024)**

An Act relative to child custody when either parent is on active military duty.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1           1) Amend Section 31A of Chapter 208 by adding at the end thereof the following:

2           (a) A party's absence, relocation, or failure to comply with custody and parenting time  
3 orders shall not be considered in determining whether to modify a custody or parenting order if  
4 the reason for the absence, relocation, or failure to comply is the party's activation to military  
5 duty or temporary duty, mobilization in support of combat or other military operation, or military  
6 deployment out of state.

7           (b) If a party with sole or joint physical custody or parenting time receives temporary  
8 duty, deployment, or mobilization orders from the military that requires the party to move a  
9 substantial distance from his or her residence or otherwise has a material effect on the ability of  
10 the party to exercise custody or parenting time rights, the court may do both of the following:

11 (1) Issue a temporary custody or parenting time order for the period extending from the  
12 date of the party's departure to the date of his or her return. This temporary custody or parenting  
13 time order shall terminate upon the return of the party, at which time the prior custody or  
14 parenting time order shall return to effect.

15 (2) Issue an order delegating all or part of the party's parenting time rights to a family  
16 member with a close relationship to the child, or a stepparent of the child, for the purpose of  
17 ensuring that the child's contact with the party is frequent and continued while the party is  
18 deployed, mobilized, or on temporary duty, if the court finds that delegating parenting time  
19 rights is in the best interest of the child.

20 (c) If a party's deployment, mobilization, or temporary duty will have a material effect  
21 on his or her ability, or anticipated ability, to appear in person at a regularly scheduled hearing,  
22 the court shall do either of the following:

23 The following terms have the following meanings:

24 (d) "Deployment" means the temporary transfer of a member of the Armed Forces in  
25 active-duty status in support of combat or some other military operation.

26 "Mobilization" means the transfer of a member of the National Guard or Military Reserve  
27 to extended active-duty status, but does not include National Guard or Military Reserve annual  
28 training.

29 "Temporary duty" means the transfer of a service member from one military base to a  
30 different location, usually another base, for a limited period of time to accomplish training or to  
31 assist in the performance of a noncombat mission.

32

33 (1) Upon motion of the party, hold an expedited hearing to determine custody and  
34 parenting issues prior to the departure of the party.

35 (2) Upon motion of the party, allow the party to present testimony and evidence by  
36 electronic means, including, but not limited to, telephone, video teleconferencing, or the Internet.

37 2) Amend Section 11 of Chapter 209C by adding at the end thereof the following:

38 (a) A party's absence, relocation, or failure to comply with custody and parenting time  
39 orders shall not be considered in determining whether to modify a custody or parenting order if  
40 the reason for the absence, relocation, or failure to comply is the party's activation to military  
41 duty or temporary duty, mobilization in support of combat or other military operation, or military  
42 deployment out of state.

43 (b) If a party with sole or joint physical custody or parenting time receives temporary  
44 duty, deployment, or mobilization orders from the military that requires the party to move a  
45 substantial distance from his or her residence or otherwise has a material effect on the ability of  
46 the party to exercise custody or parenting time rights, the court may do both of the following:

47 (1) Issue a temporary custody or parenting time order for the period extending from the  
48 date of the party's departure to the date of his or her return. This temporary custody or parenting  
49 time order shall terminate upon the return of the party, at which time the prior custody or  
50 parenting time order shall return to effect.

51 (2) Issue an order delegating all or part of the party's parenting time rights to a family  
52 member with a close relationship to the child, or a stepparent of the child, for the purpose of

53 ensuring that the child's contact with the party is frequent and continued while the party is  
54 deployed, mobilized, or on temporary duty, if the court finds that delegating parenting time  
55 rights is in the best interest of the child.

56 (c) If a party's deployment, mobilization, or temporary duty will have a material effect  
57 on his or her ability, or anticipated ability, to appear in person at a regularly scheduled hearing,  
58 the court shall do either of the following:

59 (d) The following terms have the following meanings:

60 "Deployment" means the temporary transfer of a member of the Armed Forces in active-  
61 duty status in support of combat or some other military operation.

62 "Mobilization" means the transfer of a member of the National Guard or Military Reserve  
63 to extended active-duty status, but does not include National Guard or Military Reserve annual  
64 training.

65 "Temporary duty" means the transfer of a service member from one military base to a  
66 different location, usually another base, for a limited period of time to accomplish training or to  
67 assist in the performance of a noncombat mission.

68 (1) Upon motion of the party, hold an expedited hearing to determine custody and  
69 parenting issues prior to the departure of the party.

70 (2) Upon motion of the party, allow the party to present testimony and evidence by  
71 electronic means, including, but not limited to, telephone, video conferencing, or the Internet.