

Good afternoon Sir/Ma'am,

I am writing to convey my detestation to a proposed bill that would exempt military retiree income from taxation in the state of Colorado.

I am an active duty submarine officer in the United States Navy with eight years of active service under my belt. I am a Coloradan. I grew up in Colorado, graduated from high school in Colorado, and went to university in Colorado. Due to my military service, I have not lived in Colorado for the last seven years. But I am considered a state resident of Colorado. I pay state taxes on my active duty income. And I have paid these taxes to the state of Colorado for all the years I have not lived here. I pay taxes to the state and do not reap the benefits that my taxes provide.

Why would you exempt military retiree income from taxation if you have not yet exempted active duty income? These retirees live in the state. They use the public education system, public transportation, public roads, public land, etc. They are able to benefit from the taxes they pay. This appears to be simply a government handout to a politically popular and favorited focus group. If the argument is to attract military retirees to Colorado, this argument fails, because you are simultaneously driving away active duty members who are changing their state residency to states that recognize the imbalance of paying taxes where you do not physically live (and have no control over).

When I filed my taxes last year, many of my colleagues were shocked that I paid state taxes at all. These were not the stereotype service members who changed their residency to Florida, for example, which does not have state income tax at all. They informed me their states do not collect taxes when stationed elsewhere, period. There are currently many states that already formally recognize the inequity in paying for services not able to be used.

Let me be clear. I am not advocating for a bill to exempt active duty income from state taxation. But I am asking this: if we are exempting certain groups of people regardless, why is active duty income not at the top of the list? What is the point of exempting military retirement pay? Why are you doing this? Where is the fairness in continuing to tax Coloradans serving their country outside the state but not the veterans who do live in the state? Why do I, as a Colorado resident active duty servicemember who has not lived in the state for all this time and is currently serving, not get a tax break when you are apparently planning to give them out to those not currently serving and DO live in the state? If the answer to "why are you doing this" is to drive away active duty servicemembers from calling Colorado "home," then this works. The states that treat active duty servicemembers fairly certainly are more appealing to them as they seem to change their residency pretty quickly when they can.

I have paid taxes while not living in the state for seven years and have not complained or thought this to be a problem until now, when a group of people are being given special treatment above others. Everyone should pay their fair share of taxes, no exemptions, regardless of what job they have chosen to do. And if this exemption is unavoidable due to political gain, then you are leaving out the active duty community which makes no sense. If Coloradan active duty members pay their taxes and do not live there, then everyone who does live there should, too.

Very Respectfully,

Analise Marshall

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