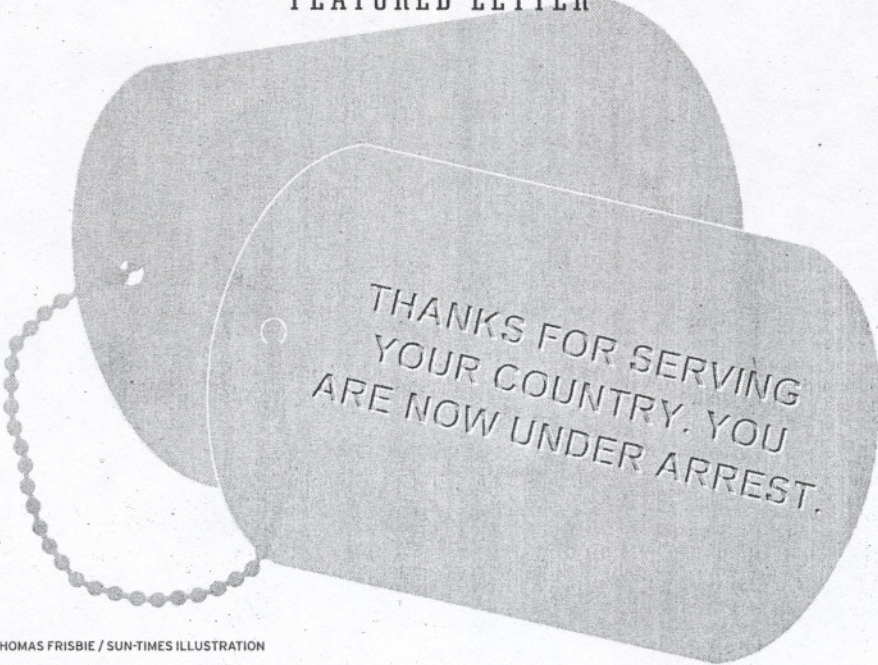


FEATURED LETTER



THANKS FOR SERVING
YOUR COUNTRY. YOU
ARE NOW UNDER ARREST.

THOMAS FRISBIE / SUN-TIMES ILLUSTRATION

Service abroad could cost fathers

Divorced or separated fathers who are reservists and guardsmen called to active duty could face substantial child support arrears and even possible arrest or jail time for non-compliance with unmodified, court-ordered child support upon their return from Iraq, Afghanistan, and other areas around the globe.

Plucked from civilian lives and jobs at much higher pay, many of these servicemen earn substantially less on military pay, yet remain responsible for the same monetary child support obligations while deployed to serve our country.

With a lack of time and resources to retain counsel and immediately file a motion for a child support reduction reflective of their impending or current circumstances, upon their return these reservists and guardsmen can face a heavy economic burden, stiff penalties and interest, and the very real possibility of jail time for non-payment or insufficient payment of child support. This injustice is caused by the fact that a motion for a child support reduction is retroactive to the date of filing, not deployment.

Many filings will not likely oc-

cure until the soldiers return home. A hurried, deploying soldier has little ability to file and navigate a legal system with inherent constraints and obstacles. This is an unnecessary unfairness to these reservists and guardsmen, who are truly among America's heroes, putting their lives on the line for their country and our principles of freedom and democracy. When they come home we can't be saying to them, "Thank you for serving your country. You're under arrest."

Due to our concern about this issue, we have been working with a task force composed of representa-

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tatives and officials from the state's attorney and attorney general's offices, the Illinois Department of Public Aid, representatives from Lt. Governor Pat Quinn's office and the Citizens Advocacy Center, and branches of the military.

The task force is solely focused

on an Intra-Illinois administrative procedure that would allow deploying reservists and guardsmen processing at mobilization stations to contact the attorney general's office, acting on behalf of the Department of Public Aid, to submit a no-cost filing for child support reduction retroactive to date of filing.

While this initiative is a good initial measure, it has limitations and only applies to Illinois-issued support orders.

Federal legislation that would make child support reduction retroactivity automatic to the date of reporting for active duty is essential to solve this problem for all reservists and guardsmen in all states.

Our reservists and guardsmen have enough to contend with, focusing on their mission and avoiding hostile fire. They should not have to worry about this "friendly fire" of what amounts to a ticking time bomb waiting for them back home.

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