

First lady seeks help for military families

by [Adelle M. Banks](#)

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WASHINGTON (RNS) First lady Michelle Obama has asked religious leaders to join her initiative to assist military families by increasing programs to support veterans and the families of military members deployed far from home.

"The faith community has been a strong bedrock for me as first lady," she told religious and community organization leaders on Wednesday (May 18). "So I would be remiss if I didn't bring this issue to you as well, and ask for your support, your leadership, and your guidance."

Obama, who launched her "Joining Forces" national initiative in April, said many congregations are already involved but that more can be done to include military families in a congregation's outreach plans.

"You don't necessarily have to be an expert in military family issues to make a difference," she said. "You can build on what you already do best."

The first lady cited youth ministries and career mentoring programs as examples where congregations could help address the needs of families of military members.

"I think this is an issue that we can all put our arms around, regardless of our party affiliation, our religious affiliation," she said. "We are all Americans, and these families need and deserve our support."

Joining Obama on a conference call were leaders from Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim organizations who work with military

families on counseling, sending care packages and assisting spouses left at home with baby-sitting, snow shoveling or house repairs.