

Residence & Domicile

General Residency Rules: The Servicemember's Civil Relief Act provides that military members may only be taxed on their military pay by their state of residence. The question of residency therefore assumes great importance, as states are generally eager to tax as many individuals as possible. The general rule of thumb is that a military member remains a resident of the state from which they joined the military, unless they have taken steps to become a resident of another state. This rule does not apply to non-military spouses; they usually become a resident of the state in which they live. Also, if a military member has non-military income, the state in which he or she lives may tax that income, even if the military member is a resident of a different state.

There is no magic factor to determine whether a taxpayer is a resident of one state or another. The general rule is that legal residency is established when an individual is physically present in a state AND has the intent to permanently reside in the state. "Intention to permanently reside" can be shown through several factors: ownership of real property; voter registration; vehicle registration; driver's license; and declaration of legal residence on legal documents (including DD 2058, used by the military). One of these factors by itself would probably not be enough to change residency, but if a service member moved to a state and registered to vote, bought a house, registered her car, got a new driver's license, and registered her children in the local schools, she would most likely be considered to be a resident of the new state.

For further information about residency, please contact your local Legal Service Office, or Staff Judge Advocate.