

Fact Sheet for H.R. 626, the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act of 2009

What H.R. 626 does

- This bill would provide 4 weeks of paid leave to Federal Employees for the birth or adoption of a child.

Current Practice

- The federal government does not offer any paid time off specifically for the purposes of caring for an infant or newly-adopted child
- Currently, federal employees who give birth to or adopt a child and need paid time off have the option of using their accrued sick days and vacation time. This means that employees must save up their leave time in the years leading up to having a child.
- Requiring that employees cobble together accrued leave makes it difficult for many to save up enough time for a paid leave. Relatively new employees, younger employees, and those who experience health problems are particularly poorly-served by the current policy.

Who Benefits

- Federal workers in all three branches of government who are eligible for unpaid family leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) will benefit from FEPPLA.
- The federal government is the country's largest employer, with over 1.8 million employees. Federal employees can be found across the country, in a wide range of jobs. Nearly half earn less than \$60,000 annually, and 19 percent earn less than the national median full-time wage.
- The American taxpayer will benefit from FEPPLA, because providing paid leave encourages a more productive and efficient workforce. Paid leave reduces employee turnover and absenteeism, and boosts employee morale, all of which combine to make for a more productive workforce. Moreover, while the federal government strives to be a "model employer," we currently lag behind other large employers, most of whom offer some form of paid leave.
- The federal government cannot compete with private-sector salaries, but we should be able to offer comparable or superior benefits, which will help recruit and retain the best and brightest to serve the American people.

Why We Need this Bill

Paid leave is an economic lifeline for working families.

- In an economic downturn like the one we're experiencing, families are less able than ever to afford to have either a mother or a father forego their paycheck. With 11.6 million Americans out of work, many families who once struggled to make ends meet on two incomes are now scrambling to stay afloat on just one paycheck.
- The current federal employee leave policy may work for the lucky families who never get sick or never need a vacation. But even the best-prepared new parents face difficult choices when child care needs arise – many are forced to choose between their child and their paycheck.
- A middle class family spends nearly \$11,000 in additional expenses for an infant such as food, clothing, health care, and child care in the first two years after birth, according to estimates by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- A general shortage of infant care requires that working parents take leave to care for their newborn. Government-sponsored day care facilities, for example, typically do not care for infants younger than 10 to 12 weeks old.

Paid leave is an investment in children's physical, cognitive, and behavioral health.

- Paid leave is good for children. Experts in child development tell us that mothers need time to recover from childbirth, and that mothers and fathers alike need time to care for and bond with a new baby. If we as a country truly value families, then we need new policies and investments that support our working families and set our children on a path for success early in life.

Paid leave will help the federal government recruit and retain the best possible workforce.

- The absence of paid parental leave means federal agencies fail to compete with the benefits packages provided by top-tier U.S. firms.
- Paid parental leave will improve recruitment and retention for federal agencies. This is especially important now, because the federal workforce is aging and in need of aggressive recruitment of precisely the younger workers who will most benefit from paid parental leave.
- The U.S. is the *only* industrialized country that does not provide income support for all workers with a new child, which means that we lag behind our global competitors.