

Responses to Arguments Made Against FEPPLA

Argument: H.R. 626 is just a costly hiring policy for the federal government at the expense of tax payers.

Response #1: CBO has stated that this legislation is PAY-GO neutral, and the “enacting the bill would not affect direct spending or receipts.”

The Joint Economic Committee estimates that the discretionary spending in this bill is equal to less than one-tenth of 1% of the federal payroll.

Response #2: Extending paid parental leave to federal employees could actually save taxpayer money. The clearest benefit of providing paid leave is reduced employee turnover. The cost of turnover is 20% of an employee’s salary, whereas four weeks of paid leave is just 8% of an employee’s salary.

Argument: A recession is not the time to be considering additional benefits like paid parental leave.

Response #1: At no time is it more urgent to think about issues like workplace flexibility and how best to help American families than during an economic crisis.

Now, with massive job losses, most families cannot go without a paycheck for any length of time. According to research by Jane Waldfogel, Professor of Social Work and Public Affairs at Columbia University, 78% of parents who reported needing leave but did not take it said that the reason they did not take their FMLA leave was because they could not afford to do so.

Argument: A recession is not the time to be considering additional benefits like paid parental leave.

Response #2: Paid leave accomplishes precisely what the economic stimulus package aims to achieve – jumpstarting the economy by creating jobs and supporting family income as the best way to spur consumption.

According to a study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, new parents spend an average of \$11,000 in the year that a child is born. By insuring that families’ incomes remain steady while a parent is at home caring for a new child, paid leave insures that new parents’ consumption remains steady too. This consumption drives economic growth, which is precisely what our economy needs to recover.

Argument: Providing paid parental leave to federal employees would cost too much

Response: Providing paid leave to federal employees can actually save money. With paid leave, federal agencies would benefit from reduced staff turnover. This lowers

recruitment and training expenses - the cost of finding and training a new employee is 20% of an employee's salary, whereas providing four weeks of paid leave is just 8% of an employee's salary.

Recent studies suggest that paid leave can even increase productivity. When workers feel supported they have higher levels of job satisfaction, which increases their commitment to the success of their agency or organization.

***Argument:** H.R. 626 is unnecessary, because federal employees already have good compensation packages.*

Response: Current policies are not keeping up with a changing American workforce. Today, 68% of children are growing up in married couple families without a stay-at-home parent, while 18.4% are being raised in working, single-parent households.

Nearly all other developed countries have adjusted to new workplace demographics. 163 countries recognize the importance of providing paid leave to families. The United States, along with Lesotho, Swaziland, and Papua New Guinea, does not.

The federal government is lagging behind the private sector as well. According to a study by the Joint Economic Committee, 75% of Fortune 100 companies offer at least six weeks of paid maternity leave. Providing this benefit makes them more attractive to young, working families who cannot afford to go without pay for any length of time.

***Argument:** H.R. 626 is unfair because it would only help individual federal employees.*

Response: Paid parental leave is good for children. Most relevant research concludes that parent-infant bonding in the early months of a child's life is vitally important to its further intellectual and emotional development.

Paid leave is also good for families. Today, many families are made up of young, dual-earner couples struggling to make ends meet on modest starting salaries. This is equally true for federal employees of prime child-bearing age (20-39 years old). The economic crisis and massive job losses mean that many of those families are now scrambling to pay the bills on just one income.

As America's largest employer, the federal government is also in a position to provide a measure of stability to families all over the United States. Federal employees can be found across the country, in a wide range of jobs. Extending benefits to federal workers can keep 1.8 million employees and their families from hardships, and can set the standard for other industries to adopt similar family-friendly employment policies.

***Argument:** A short-term disability insurance (STDI) program like the one proposed by the former Bush Administration would benefit more people.*

Response: In reality, an STDI program would not be a more inclusive option, as it would not cover new fathers or adoptive parents. It is also unrealistic to expect struggling American workers to purchase this extra coverage in these difficult economic times.

In 2008, the former Bush Administration proposed that allowing federal workers to purchase STDI coverage on a voluntary basis would appeal to recent college graduates who had not had time to accrue enough annual and sick leave to take extended time off.

This argument ignores clear economic realities. Median family income among young families is lower than the median family income overall. Young families are faced with the reality of declining incomes combined with rising costs for family health insurance and child care, and many are still struggling to pay off student loans. For these individuals, purchasing STDI coverage may not be feasible, and is certainly not the most desirable option as they begin to plan for a new baby.