

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS



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LEGISLATIVE ALERT!

(202) 637-5057

June 18, 2008

Dear Representative:

The AFL-CIO strongly supports the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act of 2008 (H.R. 5781), which would provide all executive and legislative branch federal employees with income support for up to four weeks of parental leave in order to facilitate bonding between parents with newborn infants or newly adopted children.

Federal workers are among those who must choose between meeting family obligations and maintaining family income because under current law no part of the leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act is guaranteed to be paid leave. The years when employees are most likely to become parents coincide with the early years of their career, when they are least likely to have accumulated enough savings to forgo their salary for several weeks. Workers early in their career are also least likely to have accumulated enough annual leave to cover the time needed to provide adequate care for a newborn or newly-adopted child. As a result, many workers are effectively prevented from using FMLA leave at all.

Spending time with a newborn or a newly adopted child should not be viewed as a luxury that only the rich are able to afford. Virtually all research on child development and family stability supports the notion that parent-infant bonding during the earliest months of life is crucial. Children who form strong emotional bonds or "attachment" with their parents are most likely to enjoy good health and have positive relations with others throughout their lifetimes. H.R. 5781 takes as a given that all children who become new members of a family need this critical time with their parents, and provides all parents—adoptive and biological—equal treatment.

More and more private sector employers provide paid parental leave because they recognize that productivity is lost when a parent returns to work before having found appropriate child care for a newborn or newly adopted child, or when an employee comes to work ill because all leave was exhausted during the protracted adoption process. Without the extension of paid parental leave to all executive and legislative branch employees, the federal government will lose good workers, trained at taxpayer expense, who decide to leave federal service for an employer who offers paid parental leave.

The benefits to children and families of four weeks of paid parental leave have been well established. The AFL-CIO urges Congress to pass the Federal Employee Paid Parental Leave Act of 2008.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'William Samuel', written over a light blue horizontal line.

William Samuel, Director
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT