

**Background on H.R. 626  
The Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave  
Act of 2009**

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## **Talking Points for H.R. 626, the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act**

*The federal government lags behind the private sector in providing paid parental leave.*

- Most people would be surprised to learn that the federal government does not currently provide any paid parental leave for its employees. Employees must cobble together accrued annual and sick leave if they want to receive a paycheck while they are on leave caring for a new child. This practice may work for the lucky worker who never gets sick (and never has to miss work to care for a sick child or aging parent), but it is unrealistic for most families.
- As the nation's largest employer, with over 1.8 million employees nationwide, the federal government should be a leader in family-friendly workplace policy. Right now, we're lagging behind.
- 75 percent of Fortune 100 Companies provide paid leave to new mothers. The median length of leave is six to eight weeks.
- Most Congressional offices offer paid family leave: 80 percent of House offices offer 7.6 weeks of paid family leave and 96 percent of Senate offices offer 6.1 weeks of paid leave.
- The absence of paid parental leave puts federal agencies far behind what is common in every other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) nation.

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

- The federal government is struggling to recruit and retain a qualified workforce. While we cannot compete with salaries in the private sector, we should be able to provide comparable, if not better, benefits.
- The most recent Federal Human Capital Survey by the Office of Personnel Management found that federal employees increasingly cite work-family balance as an important aspect of life. At the same time, federal employees report decreasing support from their supervisors in achieving that balance<sup>1</sup>.
- The federal workforce is aging, indicating difficulty recruiting younger workers. The average age of federal workers increased from 43.6 years to 46.7 years between 1994 and 2004. Family-friendly benefits could help attract younger workers.

*Paid leave is a key source of economic security for struggling working families.*

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Office of Personnel Management. *Federal Human Capital Survey 2008*. Available at <http://www.fhcs.opm.gov/>

- Most families no longer have a stay-at-home parent to care for a new child and they can't afford to forgo pay for any length of time.
- The typical family spends nearly \$11,000 on expenses for an infant such as food, clothing, health care, and child care, 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.
- An economic downturn is the worst time to ask parents to choose between a job and their new child. Losing either parent's salary poses real hardships for working families, especially in the face of thousands of dollars of extra baby expenses, rapidly rising costs, and disappearing savings.

*Paid leave is cost-effective for the employer. In the case of the federal government, this means that paid leave is cost-effective for taxpayers.*

- New parents with access to paid leave when their first child is born are more likely to stay with their employer than those who do not. Reducing turnover is a key cost-saver, because turnover is more expensive than providing paid leave. The average cost of turnover is about 20 percent of an employee's annual salary, while four weeks of paid leave is less than 8 percent of an employee's salary.
- In addition to reducing turnover, paid parental leave can lead to increased productivity by reducing absenteeism and improving employee morale.

## **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 on expenses for an infant such as food, clothing, health care, and child care, 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.

## **Support**

- Organizations that support the bill include: The National Partnership for Women and Families, The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU), The American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Moms Rising, and Federally Employed Women.

## **History of the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act**

H.R. 626, the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act of 2009, is identical to the version of the bill that was introduced on April 14, 2008 as H.R. 5781 by Representatives Carolyn B. Maloney, Steny H. Hoyer, and Tom Davis. This version of the bill reflects the amendment providing for four weeks of paid leave<sup>2</sup>. House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Henry Waxman and Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia Chairman Danny Davis helped move the bill to the floor. Senators Jim Webb and John Warner introduced companion legislation in the Senate as S. 3140 in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress.

H.R. 5781 passed the House of Representatives on June 16, 2008, by a 278-146 vote. Shortly afterwards, the White House issued a statement indicating that then-President Bush's advisors recommended that he veto the bill. The Statement of Administration Policy argued that the measure "would provide a costly, unnecessary new paid leave entitlement."

The bill was introduced in the Senate following its passage in the House. Subsequently, it was referred to the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia on July 21, 2008. However, action in the Senate was not completed before the last session of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney reintroduced the bill as H.R. 626 on January 22, 2009, along with Representatives Frank Wolf, Steny Hoyer, Danny K. Davis, and Edolphus Towns. Senator Jim Webb reintroduced the bill as S. 354. Original co-sponsors included Senators Cardin, Mikulski, Menendez, McCaskill, Casey, Gillibrand, Kerry, Lautenberg, Lieberman, Sanders, and Stabenow.

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<sup>2</sup> During Subcommittee consideration of H.R. 5781 in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, the bill was amended to provide four weeks of paid parental leave, instead of the eight weeks in the original bill. Thus, H.R. 5781 as it passed the House of Representatives on June 16, 2008 called for four weeks of paid parental leave, and was identical to H.R. 626.

## **Q&A on the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act (H.R. 626)**

### **Coverage**

#### ***Q: Who is covered by FEPLA?***

A: All employees of the federal government who are eligible for 12 weeks of unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act. Employees must have been with their current employer for at least a year, and have logged at least 1,250 hours in the past year.

#### ***Q: Who is NOT covered by FEPLA?***

A:

- DC government employees
- temporary employees
- part-time employees who work less than 1,250 hours in a year
- postal workers
- The military
- The Federal Aviation Administration
- Panama Canal Commission employees employed in Panama
- presidential appointees
- employees of a corporation controlled by the Farm Credit Administration
- non-citizen employees who work outside the U.S., except a chief of mission as defined by the Foreign Service Act of 1980

#### ***Q: Who is covered in the legislative branch?***

A: All employees of the House and Senate (including Members' personal offices and Committee Staff), Capitol Guide Service, Capitol Police, Congressional Budget Office, Office of the Architect of the Capitol, Office of the Attending Physician, Office of Compliance, the Office of Technology Assessment, Library of Congress, and the Government Accountability Office.

#### ***Q: In the legislative branch, Member and Committee offices make their own vacation and sick leave policies. Why wouldn't they continue to make their own parental leave policies?***

A: Member and Committee offices do not make their own *unpaid* parental leave policy. As a result of the Congressional Accountability Act, FMLA applies to the legislative branch, including Member and Committee offices. This new benefit is based on FMLA leave, so it is natural that it would apply to Member and Committee offices the way FMLA does.

A: If Congress is going to set this standard for the rest of the federal government, they should follow it themselves.

A: This policy is consistent with the length of leave already offered by many House and Senate offices, and some offices exceed the standard proposed in this legislation.

***Q: In looking at the bill, GAO and Library of Congress employees are listed separately from the rest of the Legislative Branch. Why?***

A: GAO and LOC employees are considered differently for the purpose of leave under existing law. They are eligible for FMLA, but it is applied in a different statute, so it is necessary to create a separate section of the bill to ensure that they are eligible for the four weeks of paid parental leave.

***Q: Why isn't the postal service covered?***

A: Postal employees are excluded from the Title V definition of "employee" and are therefore treated differently for the purpose of benefits than other federal employees. Their union negotiates for their benefits, unlike other federal employee unions.

***Q: If and when this bill is implemented, will it be retroactive for people who have recently had children or are currently expecting a new child and did not receive paid leave?***

A: No. It will only affect people who take leave beginning six months or more after the bill is signed into law.

***Q: Is a parent eligible to take this leave at any point in their child's life?***

A: The same regulations that apply to FMLA leave apply to the four weeks of paid leave FEPPPLA would provide as well. FMLA leave for the birth or adoption of a child must be taken within one year of the birth or adoption. For a birth, the leave must be taken for the purpose of caring for the child (i.e. if a parent waits to take leave until the child is 6 months old, it must be to care for the child, they cannot take it if the child is in daycare).

***Q: In the case of an adoption, is the leave only available to parents who adopt a baby, or are adoptive parents of older children eligible for this leave?***

A: This leave is available to parents who adopt a child of any age, within one year of the adoption. No matter how old the child, there is still a period of adjustment for the family.

***Q: Why does this bill not cover members of the Armed Forces?***

A: The Armed Forces are not covered by FMLA and set their own leave policies. In the Armed Forces, new mothers are provided with six weeks of paid convalescence leave for a normal birth and more leave if they have complications. At this time, Marines receive 10 days of paternity leave. Other military fathers are not provided with leave, but are encouraged to use their accrued vacation. In May 2009, the Senate Armed Services Committee voted to give new fathers 21 days

of paternity leave after their children are born or within 60 days of fathers' return from deployment; this bill is now pending in the Senate.

***Q: Do Armed Forces personnel get paid time off when they adopt a new child?***

A: Yes, Armed Forces personnel receive three weeks of paid leave when they adopt a child. If both parents are in the Armed Forces, however, the family will not receive a total of six weeks of leave, but only three weeks of paid adoption leave.

**Cost**

***Q: What will this cost the federal government?***

A: The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the cost of employees taking 4 weeks of paid leave will be approximately \$140 million in the first full year of implementation.<sup>3</sup> There are no pay-go considerations. The Joint Economic Committee estimates that this is equal to less than one tenth of one percent of total federal payrolls.

A: For the most part, it is not likely that agencies will hire temps to replace workers on leave. Rather, they will need to deal with the management issue of how to cope in the employee's absence.

A: There are a number of important ways that paid parental leave will save federal agencies money that are not included in CBO's cost estimate. The agencies will retain more employees, which will save turnover costs, aid in recruitment, and improve productivity, and employee morale. The Joint Economic Committee estimates that it costs nearly three times as much to replace an employee than to provide them with four weeks of paid parental leave. As Daniel Beard, Chief Administrative Officer of the U.S. House of Representatives noted, "I would even argue that this approach saves money. Employee morale is always greater when an employer treats employees with dignity."

***Q: How can legislation that costs \$140 million for four weeks of paid leave be pay-go neutral? Won't the agencies need more money to implement this?***

A: H.R. 626 is pay-go neutral: CBO states that enacting the bill "would not affect direct spending or receipts." In their score of the bill, CBO estimates that the \$140 million is the amount that the agencies currently save on salaries when federal employees who have a new child take their unpaid leave, as they are entitled to under FMLA. The Joint Economic Committee estimates that this is equal to about less than one-tenth of one percent of the federal payroll.

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<sup>3</sup> The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) cost estimate for H.R. 626 assumes a 50% chance that the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) would increase the amount of paid leave from four to eight weeks. CBO estimates the costs of eight weeks of paid leave to be \$209 million.

***Q: Should we be extending benefits for federal workers when the economy is in a recession?***

A: Paid leave insures that the birth of a child does not further destabilize families who are struggling to make ends meet. During a recession, working families need all the help they can get. 11.6 million Americans are unemployed today, which means that every paycheck counts more than ever. Millions of dual-earner couples were struggling to stay afloat on two incomes before the economic crisis, and massive job losses mean that many of those families are now scrambling to pay the bills on just one income. Without paid leave, the birth of a child means that many working families are left with no income at all. By extending benefits to federal workers, we can diminish the risk of real economic hardship for the 1.8 million employees of America's largest employer – the federal government.

A: New parents spend an average of \$11,000 in the first two years of a child's life, according to a study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. 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.

A: In a down economy, workers who take parental leave without pay are at risk of serious financial hardship. These workers may qualify for federal or state benefits such as TANF or SNAP (formerly Food Stamps), which places an additional burden on systems that are already strained by ballooning caseloads. New recipients of means-tested income support programs cost taxpayers money, and create additional pressure on budgets that are already maxed-out. By providing paid leave benefits, the federal government can avoid further straining programs that are struggling to serve a growing population of unemployed Americans.

**Current Practice**

***Q: Don't federal employees already have the best compensation packages in the nation?***

A: Federal employees may have had the best compensation packages in the 1950s, but not today. In a recent survey, the Chief Administrative Officer of the House found that the federal workforce is not "benefits-rich": the federal defined benefit plan and retiree health insurance are highly ranked, but the federal government falls short on the benefits desired by younger, working families.<sup>4</sup>

***Q: What parental leave benefits do federal workers have now?***

A: Currently, Federal employees do not have any paid leave for the birth or adoption of a child. Federal employees are eligible for 12 weeks of job-protected unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) once they have met the job tenure requirements (one year with their

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel Beard, "Investing in the Future of the Federal Workforce: Paid Parental Leave Improves Recruitment and Retention," Testimony before the Joint Economic Committee and the Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, March 6, 2008.

employer and having logged at least 1,250 hours over the past year), although workers often cannot afford to take advantage of this leave. Currently, the only way for federal workers to receive pay for parental leave is to use accrued paid sick days and vacation time. In contrast, according to a Joint Economic Committee report, 75% of Fortune 100 companies typically offer women at least six weeks of paid maternity leave.

A: Federal contractors can be reimbursed for providing paid parental leave. For example, recipients of research grants through the National Institutes of Health are permitted to provide themselves and their employees up to 30 days of paid parental leave. Surely if such practice is suitable for contractors and grantees, it is reasonable for federal employees as well.

### **Why We Need this Benefit**

***Q: Why is it important to provide paid leave to federal employees? Wouldn't it only help people in Washington, DC?***

A: The Federal Government is the country's largest employer, with over 1.8 million employees. In the current economic crisis, it is also one of the most important sources of secure jobs. Federal employees can be found across the country, in a wide range of occupations. Providing paid parental leave would help not only Washington-DC-based employees, but also federal workers nationwide. Only one-in-six (16 percent) of Federal employees are employed in the Washington, DC area. Thus, paid leave would help workers in every state during these difficult economic times. (For a list of federal employees by state and Congressional District, visit: [http://maloney.house.gov/index.php?option=com\\_issues&task=view\\_issue\\_docs&issue=263&Itemid=35](http://maloney.house.gov/index.php?option=com_issues&task=view_issue_docs&issue=263&Itemid=35))

A: As the nation's largest employer, the Federal Government should be the leader in family-friendly workplace policy. The Federal Government should provide benefits that are as good as the "best practices" in the private sector. Research by the JEC has found that Fortune 100 firms offer paid leave that typically lasts 6 to 8 weeks.<sup>5</sup> This is also consistent with the amount of leave typically offered by Congressional offices.

A: This legislation will help the federal agencies recruit and retain younger workers, which is important because the federal workforce is aging and agencies have been unable to recruit younger workers. In 2004, new federal hires were 2.5 years older than they were a decade ago.<sup>6</sup> While the federal workforce has excellent benefits for older workers, benefits for younger workers with young families are comparatively meager. The federal agencies compete for the best workers against companies who offer paid leave: three-quarters of Fortune 100 companies offer women at least 6 weeks of paid maternity leave.

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<sup>5</sup> Joint Economic Committee, *Paid Family Leave at Fortune 100 Companies: A Basic Standard, but Still Not the Gold Standard*, March 2008.

<sup>6</sup> United States Office of Personnel Management, *Federal Workforce Overview FY1994-FY2004*, p. 4.

A: Economic downturns are the worst time for a worker to lose a job. Federal employees who leave work because of inflexible family leave policies are unlikely to find new jobs quickly in the current economic crisis. Rising unemployment means that many former dual-income families are struggling to get by on just one salary. At times like these, it is more important than ever that the federal government support its workers by ensuring that they can take care of their financial, medical, and other basic needs as well as those of their families.

***Q: Doesn't the current system work well? Is this really necessary?***

A: The current system is flawed. It forces healthy, long-term employees to save up their sick days and vacation time so they can use this paid time off to receive wage replacement during their FMLA parental leave. Requiring that employees cobble together accrued leave makes it difficult for many to save up enough time for parental leave, a problem that is particularly salient for relatively new employees, younger employees, and those who experience health problems.

A: Further, using all of one's sick and vacation time for parental leave risks leaving federal employees without paid sick days available when they need them. A new baby typically requires multiple visits to the doctor, and young children are prone to catching colds and flu. Yet, if employees use their paid sick days for parental leave, they are left with few options when they or their family become ill.

A: The absence of a paid leave policy means that federal employees who have been unable to accrue sufficient paid time off for parental leave are left with only unpaid leave, which they may not be able to afford to use. Research has found that over three-quarters (77.6 percent) of those who do not exercise their right to leave under the FMLA report that one reason they did not take leave was because they could not afford to go without pay.

A: Some employees may be able to accrue enough annual and sick leave to take paid leave for their first child, but then might not have enough to have a second child soon after, because they used most or all of it the first time, or for healthcare for their child, as babies and young children are sick often and require a number of well-visits throughout the first two years of life.

A: Federal government benefits sometimes need to be updated to keep pace with society. In 1951, Congress enacted the Annual and Sick Leave Act, to set the standard for accumulation of annual and sick leave for federal employees. In 1978, the Civil Service Reform Act set guidelines for employee labor organizations, to better balance management rights and worker protections. We now need to update the federal benefits package once again to catch up with the growing number of families with two working parents.

A: All of our economic rivals provide paid parental leave, as do nearly all other nations in the world. The OECD countries now provide an average of 18 months of childbirth-related leave, much of it paid.

A: Paid parental leave will reduce turnover and save the federal government money. Turnover costs are more expensive than the cost of paying for 4 weeks of paid leave.

A: Paid parental leave will help with the recruitment and retention of younger workers, both pressing problems for the federal government. The federal workforce is aging faster than the workforce overall and recruitment of younger workers has been weak. Benefits prized by younger workers, such as paid parental leave, are offered by private sector employers, but not by the federal government.<sup>7</sup> The federal government cannot compete with private-sector salaries, but we should be able to offer comparable or superior benefits.

***Q: Many federal workers are not of child-bearing age, or some choose not to have children. Do they benefit from this at all? Is this discriminatory against them?***

A: While some federal workers will never need to use this benefit, all workers understand the need for time off to address family or health concerns.

A: The benefit is available to all federal employees, whether or not they choose to use it. There are employees who may never need to use a sick day, but that does not mean that offering sick leave to all employees is discriminatory.

A: This policy benefits children, who will contribute to our future productivity, competitiveness, and success.

### **Gender Parity**

***Q: Why is this benefit necessary for both mothers and fathers?***

A: Providing parental leave to only women reinforces inaccurate, outdated gender stereotypes, and could potentially raise legal equal protection issues. Traditional gender roles are falling by the wayside as many more men are becoming involved caregivers for their children.

A: FMLA parental leave is available to both mothers and fathers. As this bill seeks to substitute pay for part of the unpaid FMLA leave, it follows that it would apply to both men and women as the current law does.

A: Children and mothers benefit from fathers taking time to care for and bond with a new child and tend to a recovering spouse.

### **Contingency Plans**

***Q: How will government agencies cope with the increased absences?***

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<sup>7</sup> Daniel Beard, "Investing in the Future of the Federal Workforce: Paid Parental Leave Improves Recruitment and Retention," Testimony before the Joint Economic Committee and the Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, March 6, 2008.

A: Government agencies already make adjustments to accommodate employees who take unpaid FMLA leave. They shift responsibilities and plan ahead, since parental leave is foreseeable. With careful human resource management, agencies should be able to accommodate this leave.

***Q: Is there a limit to how many times an employee can use this benefit? If an employee wants to have multiple children, is there a certain period of time that they have to wait?***

A: Just like the FMLA, there is no limit on how many times over the course of employment that one person could use this leave. The benefit can only be used once in the span of a year, however.

A: There is no waiting period in between children, other than the stipulation that the leave can only be used once in a year's time. But many employees may choose to combine their paid parental leave with some accrued leave to get the majority of their FMLA leave paid, and therefore may wait to have another child until they have accumulated enough additional leave.

## Statement of Bush Administration Policy of 2008: Q & A

***Q: In 2008 the Bush Administration claimed that federal workers have adequate options to obtain paid parental leave through accumulated sick and annual leave, leave transfer and bank programs. Was this an accurate statement?***

A: Federal employees are only able to accumulate a maximum of 30 days (6 weeks) of annual leave, which is not an adequate amount of time for purposes of providing care to a newborn or a newly adopted child.

A: Early in their careers, when they are earning only 13 or 20 days per year, accumulating even 30 days is nearly impossible, yet the early years of one's career coincide with the years when employees are most likely to become parents. For adoptive parents, this leave is often used up in the many trips and appointments that precede adoption.

A: Under current law, federal employees are prohibited from using sick days to pay for part of the 12 weeks of unpaid leave provided under the FMLA, unless the mother's delivery occurred with medical complications. In other words, after a two to five day stay in the hospital, a woman cannot use any sick leave to stay home with her newborn unless she is physically incapacitated, in which case, she is using the sick leave to take care of herself, not her baby.

A: Federal workers in their child-bearing or adopting years earn less, on average, than other federal employees. They are at a moment in their careers when they can least afford to take any time off without pay, and least likely to have accumulated significant savings. It is not all unrealistic to imagine a federal worker in a low-grade job with a modest salary going into a downward financial spiral after the birth or adoption of a child and subsequent use of unpaid leave.

***Q: Why is a short-term disability (STDI) program inadequate for addressing these potential gaps?***

A: The federal government does not provide its workforce with any disability insurance.

A: In 2008, the Bush Administration proposed the establishment of an "employees-pay-all" disability insurance program. This is the same as saying to federal employees: "Go out and buy yourself some disability insurance." It is not a substitute for employer-provided paid parental leave.

A: The Bush Administration's STDI proposal discriminated against new fathers and adopted parents.

A: The FMLA settled the question of whether anyone besides a woman who has just given birth deserves time off from work to care for a child. The Bush administration's STDI proposal was a huge step backwards for federal workers and families, and should not be revived as a substitute for paid family leave.

***Q: The Bush Administration claimed that 86 percent of federal employees said they were very satisfied or satisfied with paid leave for illness and family care situations (childbirth, adoption, eldercare, etc.). If this is the case, why offer paid parental leave?***

A: The Bush Administration's claim that 86 percent of federal employees are satisfied with current levels of paid leave for illness and family care was highly misleading.

A: Less than one-third of survey respondents of child bearing age (25-49 years) said they were "very satisfied" with current benefits.

A: The question asked in the survey did not address the question of paid parental leave or whether its provision by the government would encourage employees to remain in federal government employment.

A: The leave in this bill is not for illness or to care for a sick family member. It is to spend time with a new child.

A: All the major federal unions support this bill.

***Q: Why did the Bush Administration oppose paid leave for federal workers?***

A: The former Administration claimed that H.R. 5781, which was identical to the current H.R. 626, was too costly. In reality, this bill is PAYGO neutral. "Enacting H.R. 626 would not affect direct spending or receipts," according to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO). The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the total value of the mother's and father's paychecks while they use the four weeks of parental leave would come to \$140 million in the first full year of implementation.

Paid parental leave will save federal agencies money in a number of important ways that are not included in CBO's cost estimate. The agencies will retain more employees, which will save turnover costs.

The largest financial gain will be in improved retention. The Joint Economic Committee estimates that it costs nearly three times as much to replace an employee as it does to provide them with four weeks of paid parental leave.

Research shows that having access to leave can improve productivity and employee morale. These kinds of cost-savings are so important that Daniel Beard, Chief Administrative Officer of the U.S. House of Representatives, noted, "I would even argue that this approach saves money. Employee morale is always greater when an employer treats employees with dignity, especially in times of crisis." He also pointed out, "Salary budgets remain the same whether an employee takes leave or not. The pay for that employee has already been included in the budget. Whether that individual is on paid leave or not doesn't affect the employing authority's bottom line."

***Q: Does the Obama Administration support paid leave for federal workers?***

A: The Obama Administration is expected to fully support the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act. In 2008, then-Senator Obama was a co-sponsor of the bill (S. 3140). He stated, "We must do everything we can to ensure the best and the brightest Americans are recruited to serve in our federal agencies and programs, and that means providing them with quality work environments as well as competitive benefits packages. Our government should reflect our nation's values and aspirations, and we cannot ask federal employees to choose between caring for their children and serving their country. I believe strong families are the foundation for a strong community and nation, and that is why I am cosponsoring the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act of 2008."

***Q: Do federal workers have enough paid leave available to them to draw on for parental leave?***

A: Under the current system, federal workers cannot accrue enough leave to take the entire 12 weeks of FMLA as paid leave. Assuming a federal worker takes two weeks of vacation each year, it would take a federal worker about 10 years to accrue enough annual leave to receive 6 weeks of pay – the maximum accrual allowed – during their 12 weeks of FMLA. If a federal worker never took vacation time, it would still take her over 2 years to save 6 weeks of paid leave.

***Q: Is there evidence that current leave policies are inadequate?***

A: The Office of Personnel Management's 2008 Federal Human Capital Survey shows that federal employees attach greater importance to issues of work-life balance now than ever before, yet are increasingly dissatisfied with the options available, or with the support they are given in this area. The percentage of employees who expressed satisfaction with paid leave policies for illness or family care situations decreased from 86% in 2004 to 84% in 2008. During this same time period, fewer employees each year expressed that their supervisors supported their need to balance work and family life. These statistics do not reflect the full magnitude of rising dissatisfaction with current leave policies, because young workers – those most likely to need parental leave – are underrepresented in the survey.<sup>8</sup>

***Q: How do we know that federal workers need paid parental leave?***

A: Labor unions representing federal workers have testified before Congress that this is an important benefit needed by their members. Many federal workers have shared heartbreaking personal stories testifying to the need for updated leave policies, from a woman who had to go back to work with an open wound due to a C-section, to a single mom who couldn't afford to take more than a few weeks of leave – and everything in between.

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. Office of Personnel Management. *Federal Human Capital Survey 2008*. Available at [http://www.fhcs.opm.gov/2008FILES/2008\\_Govtwide\\_Report.pdf](http://www.fhcs.opm.gov/2008FILES/2008_Govtwide_Report.pdf)

**CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE  
COST ESTIMATE**

**H.R. 626**

**Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act of 2009**

*As ordered reported by the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
on May 6, 2009*

**SUMMARY**

H.R. 626 would amend title 5 of the United States Code, the Congressional Accountability Act, and the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) by creating a new category of leave under FMLA. This new category would provide four weeks of paid leave to federal employees following the birth, adoption, or fostering of a child. In addition, the legislation permits the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to increase the amount of paid leave provided to a total of eight weeks based on the consideration of several factors such as the cost to the federal government and enhanced recruitment and retention of employees.

Under current law, federal employees who have completed at least 12 months of service are entitled to up to 12 weeks of leave without pay after the birth, adoption, or fostering of a child. Upon return from FMLA leave, an employee must be returned to the same position or to an "equivalent position with equivalent benefits, pay, status, and other terms and conditions of employment." Employees may get paid during that 12-week period by using any annual or sick leave that they have accrued. The leave provided by this bill would be available only within the 12-week FMLA leave period.

CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 626 would cost \$67 million in 2010 and a total of \$938 million over the 2010-2014 period, subject to appropriation of the necessary funds. Enacting H.R. 626 would not affect direct spending or receipts.

The bill contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

**ESTIMATED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

The estimated budgetary impact of H.R. 626 is shown in the following table. The costs of this legislation would fall in all budget functions (except functions 900 and 950).

	By Fiscal Year, in Millions of Dollars					
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2010-2014
<b>CHANGES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION</b>						
Estimated Authorization Level	69	215	219	221	224	947
Estimated Outlays	67	209	218	221	223	938

## **BASIS OF ESTIMATE**

For this estimate, CBO assumes that H.R. 626 will be enacted by October 1, 2009, and that the necessary amounts for implementing it will be appropriated each year. Under the legislation, the new category of leave would become available six months after enactment (that is, around April 2010). As a result, the cost of the legislation in 2010 reflects implementation for only half of the year. After 2010, CBO has included in its estimate a 50 percent probability that OPM will use its authority to increase the amount of paid leave available from four weeks to eight weeks. Costs in future years are projected to grow with inflation.

CBO assumes that the potential users of the new leave would be primarily the roughly 700,000 civilian employees who are between the ages of 20 and 44 and have been employed at least 12 months. (This figure excludes employees of the Postal Service because H.R. 626 amends title 5 of the United States Code, which does not apply to them.)

Estimating an adoption rate based on data from the Department of Health and Human Services and applying birth rate information for the relevant age cohorts from the National Center on Health Statistics to the roughly 313,000 women eligible for the new leave yields about 17,800 women who might give birth or adopt in a given year. Based on average salary information from OPM, CBO estimates that four weeks of paid leave—the maximum amount guaranteed by the bill—for female employees would cost between \$2,800 (for those in the youngest age cohort) and \$5,400 (for those in the 40-44 age cohort). Assuming that nearly all of those women took the maximum amount of leave, CBO estimates the cost of the leave to be \$77 million this year (if it were available for the entire 12-month period).

Applying those same calculations to the 390,000 men in the affected age groups, CBO estimates that roughly 24,000 men would be eligible for the four weeks of paid leave, at an average cost of between \$3,100 and \$6,000 per male employee. Assuming that eligible men would take the leave at about one-half the rate of women, CBO estimates that men would use another \$54 million worth of leave this year (if it were available for the entire 12-month period), bringing the total to \$130 million.

Since CBO assumes that the new leave would not be available until half-way through fiscal year 2010, there would be no costs for 2009 and the 2010 costs would represent only six months of the year, totaling \$67 million. Beyond 2010, CBO assumes a full year of availability and has included a 50 percent probability that OPM would increase the amount of paid leave available to employees. As a result, anticipated costs increase to \$209 million in 2011. (The 2011 costs would be about \$140 billion if the benefit were kept at a maximum of four weeks.)

The effects of this bill on the budget derive from the provision of a new form of paid leave. To the extent that such a new benefit enables people to take advantage of paid leave rather than taking leave without pay, the costs are clear. However, employees who would currently use annual or sick leave upon the birth, adoption, or fostering of a child may choose to use this new form of paid leave and save their accrued leave for a later date. CBO has no basis for estimating

the magnitude of such substitution, but the deferral of annual and sick leave also represents a cost either in terms of increased availability of paid leave or cash payments upon separation.

In addition, providing a more generous benefit to employees may enhance the federal government's ability to retain employees after the birth or adoption of a child and thereby lower recruitment and training costs. CBO estimates that such potential savings are likely to be relatively small over the next five years.

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE-SECTOR IMPACT**

H.R. 626 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

### **ESTIMATE PREPARED BY:**

Federal Costs: Barry Blom

Impact on State, Local, and Tribal Governments: Elizabeth Cove Delisle

Impact on the Private Sector: Paige Piper/Bach

### **ESTIMATE APPROVED BY:**

Theresa Gullo

Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis

**Talking Points**  
**On the Congressional Budget Office Cost Estimates for H.R. 626,**  
**The Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act of 2009**

H.R. 626 is deficit-neutral: CBO states that “enacting H.R. 626 would not affect direct spending or receipts.” In their score of the bill, CBO estimates the total value of the leaves taken in the first full year of implementation will total \$209 million.

**The \$209 million is the amount that the agencies currently save on salaries when federal employees who have a new child take their unpaid leave, as they are entitled to under FMLA.** The Joint Economic Committee estimates that this is equal to less than one-tenth of one percent of the federal payroll.

\*To get the \$209 million figure, CBO tallies up the value of salaries for federal employees who will take advantage of paid parental leave:

- CBO assumes that every year, 17,800 female federal employees give birth or adopt and that nearly all will take the maximum amount of leave.
- CBO assumes that every year, 24,000 male federal employees have a new child and that they will take leave at about one-half the rate of women.
- Given the average salaries of male and female federal employees, the total value of the mother’s and father’s paychecks while they use the four weeks of parental leave comes to \$140 million in the first full year of implementation. However, the legislation gives the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) the discretion to increase allowable paid leave to eight weeks and CBO assumes a 50 percent chance that OPM will do so, raising the value of leave to \$209 million.

Federal agencies will have to sort out how to deal with paying this new benefit and whether they will ask for increased appropriations in the future. Currently, federal employees who have a child bear both the burden of going without pay during their FMLA leave as well as coping with their new family expenses. USDA estimates that a family will spend an additional \$11,000 dollars in the first two years of having a new child, on top of any loss in salary during unpaid leave.

The CBO score does not take into account the cost savings of providing paid parental leave, but CBO suggests the cost savings of providing paid parental leave by reducing turnover would be relatively small over the next five years. However, it costs about 20 percent of an employee’s salary to hire and train their replacement, far less than offering an-already trained employee a few weeks of paid leave. Paid parental leave can also increase productivity. In testimony in support of this bill, Daniel Beard, Chief Administrative Officer of the U.S. House of Representatives concurred, “... this approach saves money. Employee morale is always greater when an employer treats employees with dignity, especially in times of crisis.”

## The Need for the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act (H.R. 626) – Personal Stories from Federal Workers

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A Department of Energy employee had to return to work after she used up all of her saved annual and sick leave despite the fact that her C-Section wound had not healed and she was still on narcotic painkillers.

*Here's what she wrote:*

“After 36 hours of labor, my daughter was born via emergency c-section. I stayed in the hospital for 3 nights after the surgery (if I had stayed one more night, my medical problems likely would have been detected in the hospital, making the remainder of this story very different). The day after I was discharged, I noticed a lot of bleeding from my C-section wound. I went to my doctor's office, where they determined that the wound was infected, and they re-opened the entire wound to clean it out and drain it. The doctors then did not feel that they could safely re-stitch it, so the wound was left to heal from the inside out, with "wet to dry" dressing changes -- the wound was about 17 cm long and 5 cm deep, stuffed with gauze pads. I had a home nurse visit daily for about 2 months, after which point it was decided that my husband could take over care responsibilities for me. Healing was strangely slow, for reasons that no one could ever explain to me. So, there I was, with my leave dwindling away, wondering when this thing would heal, doped up on Percocet. I delayed my return to work several times, in hopes that I could heal and get off the drugs - but the hours ran out, and I simply couldn't go unpaid. As a result, when the leave I had saved up ran out after 3.5 months, I was forced to return to work with a quite long and deep open wound in my abdomen (and still on narcotic painkillers).”

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A Walter Reed Army Medical Center nurse had to use a combination of leave without pay and leave donated by her colleagues to take off the necessary time to heal following her c-section. She would like to have more children, but is not sure how she and her husband could manage any future leave.

*Here's what she wrote:*

“My daughter was born 10 months ago, while I was working for Walter Reed Army Medical Center as a nurse. Because my baby was in a breech position, I had a planned c-section and needed to take 8-9 weeks off to recover from the surgery. Unfortunately, I only had just under 5 weeks of paid leave saved up. Luckily, for me a few of my coworkers had a lot of use or lose leave which they generously donated to me. But even with their generosity, I still needed to take a few days of leave without pay to take off the 9 weeks I had originally hoped to take following the birth. However, due to the difficulty in finding child care in this area because of the extensive day care wait lists, I actually had to take another week of leave which forced me into more leave without pay.

The larger problem is ahead of me. My husband and I would like to have several kids. I'm in my early thirties and I have worked for the government (DOD) for 11 years (4 of which were on active duty for the US Army). I currently have a balance of < 10 hours of sick leave due to my 10 month old needing to stay home from day care due to various illnesses acquired in day care. We would like to have another child within the next year or so. There will be no chance that I will have more than a week or 2 worth of leave for another maternity leave. Will my coworkers come through for me again? I can't depend on it. I don't know what we'll do.

It's so frustrating because I know that DOD is one of the largest employers in the U.S. with the largest budget of the government. However, they cannot find the justification or the appropriate money to offer any paid maternity leave. This is where I really get emotional so I will stop.”

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In anticipation of the birth of their first child a couple who work at the Government Accountability Office saved both leave and money to help make expected time off easier for the family. However, unexpected home repairs used up their savings, forcing the new parents to take on credit card debt that they still haven't paid off, and requiring the mother to return to work earlier than planned. They would like to have a second child, but are not sure how they could afford it without paid leave.

*Here is what the mother wrote:*

“I had 5.5 years of federal employment when I had my daughter, who is now 17 months old. After a C-section, which required 8 weeks of sick leave, I was also forced to spend down my remaining annual leave before having to take Leave Without Pay for two pay periods. Because we could not afford to go any longer than that without my paycheck, I came back to work when my daughter was 4.5 months old. I have had to totally rebuild my sick and annual leave, and have made only a small impact there since coming back to work one year ago. Not to mention that we want to have a second child in the near future, and I will not have as much leave for the second child as I did for the first.”

*Here is what the father added:*

“We had expected my wife to have some leave without pay, and we had budgeted for it. Prior to the baby being born, we had no credit card debt. But a month into my wife's maternity leave, we had to replace the heat pump, which cost us about \$6,000. That completely wiped out our cash reserves. Since my wife was only paid for 45-55 hours per pay period, we were forced to live off credit cards during the remainder of her maternity leave and in the first few months after she went back to work. We have not yet cleared all of that debt. Having the 6 weeks of full pay sure would have come in handy at the time.”

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As the sole breadwinner in her family, one Government Accountability Office employee could only afford to take six weeks of maternity leave, some of which was unpaid. She calls her short maternity leave the worst decision of her life.

*Here's what she wrote:*

Because my husband was in graduate school and I was the sole breadwinner who was new to GAO, I was only able to take six weeks total maternity leave (including my leave, donated leave and unpaid leave) when my daughter was born. It was the worst decision I've ever made, and it really wreaked havoc on my life, my husband and daughter's lives and my mother's life.

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One federal employee used up much of her saved sick leave before the birth of her son, as a result of going into pre-term labor that forced her to stay on strict bed rest.

*Here's what she wrote:*

“When I was pregnant with my son, I carefully saved up my sick and annual leave, calculating how much I would have when he was born. Unexpectedly, I went into pre-term labor a month before he was due. I was in the hospital for 3 days (and then in and out 4 more times before he was actually born) and on strict bed-rest 24/7. This meant that I used up a lot of my sick leave before my son was even born! Although I came back full-time at the time I had originally planned (when he was 3 1/2 months old), I also ended up having to work from home part-time when he was only 2 months old because I felt I needed to do this to try get as many paid hours as I could. That meant that I spent less time with my son (bonding with him, caring for him, getting used to being a new mother) than I would have liked.”

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One federal employee was only able to save 4.5 weeks of leave before the birth of her son. As a result, she had to rely on donated leave and leave without pay for her maternity leave. She also used advanced sick leave to stay home, but this has left her with a sick leave deficit that has made being a working mother particularly difficult.

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*Here is what she wrote:*

“I took a total of 18 weeks off for maternity leave. I had only been with the federal government for about 2 years before I went on maternity leave so I didn't have a lot of paid leave accrued -- plus, I only earn 4 hours per pay period.

I used up all my paid sick and annual leave within 4.5 weeks (and I had been hoarding it from the moment I found out I was pregnant). I was eligible to get a leave donation from my husband

(also a government employee), but you can only receive donations up to six weeks post partum so I got about 60 hours (1.5 weeks) from him .

From 6 weeks to 18 weeks, I used a combination of LWOP and advanced sick leave. Advanced leave helped take the financial bite out of LWOP and without the advanced sick leave I would have had to 1) return to work earlier, or 2) use up a lot of savings to stay home.

However, when I returned to work full time, not only did I have no annual leave, but I have a sick leave deficit which will take a long time to dig myself out of. That means if I need to take time off work for doctors appointments or illness I have to use annual leave (still earning only 4 hours per pay period), or I have to work late or on weekends to make up the hours I've missed.”

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## IN THE PRESS

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### **Parental Leave Passes Committee as Foe Foresees Families Stocking Up on Kids**

By Joe Davidson

The Washington Post  
Thursday, May 7, 2009

When it comes to paid parental leave for federal employees, everything isn't simple motherhood and apple pie.

To Rep. Darrell Issa (Calif.), the top Republican on the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, legislation that would allow Frankie and Flo Fed four paid weeks of leave following the birth, adoption or fostering of a child is a dollar sign -- \$850 million over five years.

To Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney (D-N.Y.), who has waged a decade-long fight for the bill, it's an investment in the nation's future, an effort that would improve children's health and boost employee productivity.

Maloney's side won the debate yesterday as the committee approved her bill on a voice vote and sent it to the full House.

"No federal employee who's a new parent should be forced to choose between their paycheck and their newborn -- or newly adopted -- child in those vital first few weeks home," Maloney said. "As the nation's largest employer, the federal government can -- and should -- lead the way on this issue."

Currently, federal employees who have been on the job at least a year can take up to 12 weeks of leave, but without pay.

With the voice vote, it was hard to determine exactly how individual members voted, but certainly most of the ayes came from the Democratic side of the Rayburn House Office Building committee room, while many Republicans remained silent when the nays were called.

"I had a child when I worked for the state government, and I was terrified I'd be fired," Maloney said before the vote.

Save for Issa, the Republicans had nothing at all to say about the measure, leaving it to their leader to play the Scrooge who uses money as a hammer against the family value of mothers and fathers staying home with their newborns or newly adopted children.

Issa is concerned that federal employees could adopt children year after year after year, all the while collecting those four weeks of paid annual leave.

Workers "could have one adoption or one foster child per year, resulting in every year you get a new foster child, every year the husband and wife if they are both federal workers would take four weeks off with pay, because they have simply taken in a new foster child," he said before the vote.

Can't you see Frankie and Flo stocking up on kiddies like the old woman who lived in a shoe, who had so many children she didn't know what to do? Frankie and Flo would get that paid month each year for each new one, doing damage to Uncle Sam's wallet in the process.

Issa's vision of federal workers adopting one child after another provided an opening for Rep. Danny K. Davis (D-Ill.) to plug National Foster Care Month, which is now.

"I happen to represent a district that has the largest number of children in foster care in the United States of America," he said. More than a third of kids in his Chicago don't live with their parents, he added.

"I would be delighted if federal workers or any other workers . . . adopted one of these children every year," Davis continued. "As a matter of fact, I'd give them a Medal of Honor if every year they found that they could adopt another child, because there is a tremendous need for children to be adopted."

Issa supports adoption, too. But evidently not at the cost of the legislation.

"The federal government cannot send a message that when everyone else is laying off, we're not only hiring and growing, but in fact adding benefits to the workforce," he said.

The \$850 million in increased costs to the government he cited comes from an estimate the Congressional Budget Office did last year. Maloney countered that the bill can attract good people to government and keep them working for Washington.

"This benefit can save the government money by reducing turnover," she said. "It costs roughly 20 percent of an employee's salary to hire and train new workers, compared with about 8 percent to provide a long-standing employee with a few weeks of paid leave."

That was echoed by Vanessa Robertson, a 33-year-old Securities and Exchange Commission accountant, who is expecting her third child in August. She attended the hearing with a group wearing National Treasury Employees Union stickers that read "Support working families."

When she had her second child, Sean, almost four years ago, she learned "the effect of not having any paid time off," she said. "It really is a financial struggle." She's been saving up vacation and sick leave time for two years so she can spend time with her new baby.

With yesterday's vote, the committee moved the United States one step closer to joining the global community of nations, the "163 countries [that] recognize the importance of providing paid leave to families," Maloney said.

"The United States, along with Lesotho, Swaziland and Papua New Guinea, does not."

You can view the bill on the Library of Congress's Thomas Web site (<http://www.thomas.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c111:H.R.626>).

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March 26, 2009, 11:34 am

## **One Step Closer to Equality**

By [Lisa Belkin](#)

The New York Times

Young women with children are no less ambitious in the workplace than women without children, according to a [study](#) of long-term attitudes of the American work force entitled, "Times Are Changing: Gender and Generation at Work and At Home." The survey of 3,500 workers, released today by the Families and Work Institute, found that 69 percent of mothers under age 29 say they want to move up the career ladder, while 66 percent of women without children have the same ambition.

That was not always the case. When a similar study was done seven years ago — right about the time the term "opting out" first entered the work/life conversation — only 48 percent of young mothers expressed a desire to move up, compared with 61 percent of women without children (and 66 percent of men). And it is striking that while the levels of ambition are now more equal, they are also lower than they once were. In 1992, 80 percent of men and 72 percent of women under the age of 29 wanted jobs with greater responsibility, a change that seems consistent with a growing desire by both men and women for balance in their lives.

This year's data is the latest addition to a survey that has been ongoing for 22 years. Because random groups of respondents are asked the same questions each time, it is possible to see how attitudes change. Just as women who are mothers are setting their sights higher at work, society seems to be more supportive of such ambition, the data shows; 80 percent of women and 67 percent of men agree that women can hold paying jobs and also be good mothers. Back in 1977 those numbers were 71 percent of women and only 49 percent of men.

Why the changes? There are hints in the data. The women in the survey say that they are carrying more economic responsibility — women in two-income households are responsible for 44 percent of household income today compared with 39 percent in 1997, the study says. At the

same time, men seem to be taking on more responsibility at home — 31 percent of women now say their husbands take on half of the child care, an increase of 10 percent in the past 15 years.

Those are better numbers, to be sure, but they are only a next step in the journey for both men and women, those with and without children.

“Change is always sporadic and slow,” says Ellen Galinsky, head of the Families and Work Institute, who has presided over many of these surveys. “These results are more of a leap than I expected — that young women and men are equally ambitious, that young women with and without children are equally ambitious, that women and men hold the same views of appropriate gender roles, that fathers clearly are spending more time with their kids, that men clearly see it as ‘socially desirable’ to take responsibility for children, cooking, and cleaning, and overall, that women are more likely to see their role as also being economic providers (which they clearly are in this difficult economy) and that men are more likely to see their role as also being caregivers in the family.”

Is it enough of a leap, I asked her. What numbers mean we as a society have reached our destination, that her organization and others like it have achieved their goal, that the workplace is receptive and helpful to working parents? Is 66 percent enough? 75 percent? Can we get to 100 percent?

“Is this ‘good enough’?” she echoed. “Like you, many people would say no.”

So take a moment to celebrate the progress. Then reflect on how much further we still have to go.

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## ***House panel approves paid parental leave act***

By Alyssa Rosenberg  
Government Executive  
May 6, 2009

The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee passed the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act on Wednesday, sending the bill to the full House for the second year in a row.

"No one should have to choose between caring for a child and their paycheck, especially during an economic downturn," said Rep. Edolphus Towns, D-N.Y., chairman of the committee.

The bill (H.R. 626) would allow federal employees to take four weeks of paid leave for the birth or adoption of a child, in addition to any annual or sick leave they had accrued. The legislation passed the House in 2008, but stalled in the Senate.

Currently, the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act allows employees to take off up to 12 weeks when they have or adopt a child, but that leave is unpaid. In some cases, federal employees can substitute accrued annual or sick leave for unpaid leave.

Federal employee groups, including the National Treasury Employees Union, National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association, International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, and Federally Employed Women praised the committee's approval of the bill, saying it would make the federal government a more attractive employer.

But in a move that could signal upcoming Republican resistance, Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Calif., the committee's ranking member, said he could not support the bill at this time because of its cost, which the Congressional Budget Office has pegged at \$850 million over five years.

"I fully recognize that, like their private sector counterparts, most federal employees work hard and deserve competitive compensation and benefits packages," Issa wrote in a May 4 letter to his colleagues on the committee. "In these perilous economic times, however, when many in the private sector are having to make difficult cuts, it is inappropriate for us to heap even more generous benefits on federal employees."

But Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., the bill's sponsor, said CBO had reported that the bill would not violate pay-as-you-go rules. And Rep. Gerry Connolly, D-Va., said Issa's assessment of the costs was based on misguided priorities.

"If we're going to attract the best and the brightest, competing with the private sector, this is increasingly something younger workers expect to be part of the benefit package," Connolly said. He noted that during his term as chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in Virginia, "We felt compelled to add this very benefit if we were going to compete with the private sector and other public [employers]. I think the question is not can we afford to do this, but can we afford not to do this?"

Issa also said he was concerned about language that would allow paid leave for employees who adopt or bring a foster child into their home. That provision could drive up costs, he said. Issa added that though he supports foster parents, he is not sure they should be covered.

Rep. Danny K. Davis, D-Ill., noted that May is National Foster Care Month, and said foster parents should receive the same support as birth parents. Thirty-four percent of the children in Davis' district live with someone other than their birth parents. "I would be delighted if federal workers or any other workers were adopting one of these children every year," he said. "In fact, I'd give them a Medal of Honor."