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Chairman Towns, Ranking Member Issa, and Members of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee,

Tomorrow you will be marking up HR 626, the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act of 2009 that was introduced by Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-14-NY) and provides four weeks of paid leave for federal workers following the birth or adoption of a child. On behalf of the members of Federally Employed Women (FEW), we are asking that you support this important bill.

Currently new parents employed by the federal government can take up to 12 weeks leave upon the birth or adoption of a child provided they can afford it or have enough annual or sick leave to use. These 12 weeks of leave is unpaid.

Yet many federal workers cannot enjoy the birth or adoption of a new child because they cannot afford to take time off without pay. Providing them with paid leave would express our appreciation of the work they do, as well as stress the importance of spending more time with one's family.

Extra weeks of paid leave would relieve employees from having to use their sick or annual leave. It is an added benefit that not only will be good for current employees, but also could attract many more potential employees to the federal government. Considering the large numbers of retirements expected over the next five years (well over half of the federal workforce will be eligible to retire), we need to ensure that enough workers are employed with the federal government so that the essential services they provide to all Americans will not be interrupted – from Social Security disbursements to protecting our nation to mail delivery to helping the needy.

FEW is a private, non-profit organization founded in 1968 after Executive Order 11375 was issued that added sex discrimination to the list of prohibited discrimination in the federal government. FEW has grown into a proactive organization serving over one million federally employed women – both in the military and civilian workforce.

Sincerely,

Janet Kopenhaver
Washington Representative