

March 20, 2009

Dear Members of Congress:

We are writing to urge your support of the **Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act of 2009 (S. 354/H.R. 626)**, groundbreaking legislation that provides federal workers with four weeks of full pay to use while they are on Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave for the birth or adoption of a child. The bill allows federal workers to use up to eight weeks of accrued paid sick and annual leave during the remainder of their FMLA leave to care for their new child. It also gives the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) authority to increase the amount of paid parental leave from four to eight weeks once further studies are conducted.

Congress should waste no time in passing this bill, which will help our federal government recruit and retain dedicated and talented workers, enable working parents to care for and bond with newborns and newly-adopted children, and show that the federal government truly values families.

Currently, federal workers do not have any guarantee of paid leave for the birth or adoption of a new child. Some have accrued paid sick or vacation time that they may be able to use while on FMLA leave. However, others, especially younger workers who haven't accrued sick or vacation time, have no choice but to take unpaid leave.

Paid parental leave is critical for all families. Paid parental leave enables working parents to take care of and bond with their newborns and newly-adopted children, which is critical to their children's health and well-being—without having to worry about their paycheck. As more mothers have entered the paid labor force for their family's economic well-being—increasing their labor force participation rate from 47 to 72 percent between 1975 and 2007—access to paid parental leave has become a necessity for today's working families.

Offering paid parental leave will help the federal government recruit and retain dedicated and talented workers. In the coming years, federal agencies will be hiring many new workers. Fifty-eight percent of supervisory and 48 percent of non-supervisory workers will be eligible to retire by the end of fiscal year 2010, according to a 2004 report by OPM. In order to compete with the private sector, and attract and retain the best workers, federal benefits must be competitive. According to a March 2008 report by the Joint Economic Committee Majority Staff, nearly all Fortune 100 firms offer working parents some paid time off when they have a new child. Furthermore, in a global economy, the federal government must compete not only with the American private sector, but with foreign countries as well. Yet, our nation's paid parental leave policies are lagging: we are the only industrialized nation that does not guarantee paid leave upon the birth or adoption of a child. A paid parental leave policy will also save the government money by reducing turnover and replacement costs, which is estimated to be 25 percent of the worker's salary.

The Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act is an important first step toward establishing the federal government as a model employer and making paid leave available

to all workers. The Act complements a broader paid family and medical leave agenda that working family advocates, including women's, children's, health and labor groups, have been strongly supporting. Passing this bill will help the federal government set a standard for U.S. employers and provide a critical benchmark for achieving paid family and medical leave for all workers.

We urge you to demonstrate your steadfast commitment to our nation's working families by supporting the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act.

Sincerely,

National Partnership for Women & Families
A Better Balance: The Work & Family Legal Center
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Civil Liberties Union
American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
ARISE CHICAGO
Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN)
Business and Professional Women/USA
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW)
Family Voices New Jersey
Federally Employed Women (FEW)
Illinois Nurses Association
Illinois Paid Leave Coalition
Interfaith Worker Justice
International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace & Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW)
Iowa Commission on the Status of Women
Labor Project for Working Families
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
Legal Aid Society – Employment Law Center in San Francisco
Legal Momentum
Massachusetts Paid Leave Coalition
MomsRising
National Association of Commissions for Women
National Association of Mothers' Centers
National Capital Area Union Retirees
National Center on Caregiving, Family Caregiver Alliance
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Women's Organizations
National Employment Lawyers Association (NELA)

National Employment Law Project
National Fatherhood Initiative
National Organization for Women (NOW)
National Respite Coalition
National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU)
National Women's Health Network
New Hampshire Women's Alliance
New Hampshire Women's Lobby
New Jersey Time to Care Coalition
New York State Coalition for Paid Family Leave
Northwest Women's Law Center
OWL – The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
ParentsWork
Partnership for Public Service
PathWaysPA
Pride At Work, AFL-CIO
Project IRENE
RESULTS
RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network of New Jersey
Take Care Net
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Steelworkers (USW)
Voices for America's Children
Voices for Illinois Children
Washington Office of Public Policy, Women's Division, United Methodist Church
Wider Opportunities for Women
Women Employed
Women's International Public Health Network (WIPHN)
Women's Law & Policy Project
Women's Law Project
Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment
Women's Research & Education Institute (WREI)
YWCA Quincy
9to5, the National Association of Working Women