

## **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.

