

VALUING FAMILIES at WORK:

Priorities for Federal Action

SUMMARY

- Make the Valuing Families at Work agenda a high-profile priority of Congress.
- Guarantee a minimum number of paid sick days for everyone in the labor force.
- Ensure job-protected and affordable family and medical leave for all workers.
- Ensure all employees have the right to greater control over their work schedules so they are not penalized for care giving responsibilities.

INITIATED BY:

Family Values at Work: A Multi-State Consortium
National Partnership for Women & Families

SIGNERS:

9to5, National Association of Working Women

A Better Balance: The Work and Family Legal Center

AFL-CIO

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Workers (AFSCME)

Business and Professional Women's Foundation

Center for American Progress Action Fund

Center for Law and Social Policy

Coalition of Black Trade Unionists

Communications Workers of America

Council of New Jersey State College Locals, AFT, AFL-CIO

DC Employment Justice Center

Domestic Workers United

Economic Opportunity Institute (Seattle, Wash.)

Fairness Initiative

Georgia Job/Family Collaborative

Interfaith Worker Justice

Iowa Commission on the Status of Women (ICSW)

Labor Project for Working Families

Laborers' International Union of North America

Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center

Maine Women's Lobby

Massachusetts Paid Leave Coalition

MomsRising.org

National Association of Social Workers

National Association of Mothers' Centers (NAMC)

National Center on Caregiving, Family Caregiver Alliance

National Council of Jewish Women

National Council of Negro Women

National Council of Women's Organizations

National Association of Commissions for Women (NACW)

National Employment Law Project

National Women's Law Center

National Organization for Women

New Jersey Citizen Action

New Jersey Work Environment Council

New Jersey Time to Care Coalition

NYS Paid Family Leave Coalition

New York Union Childcare Coalition

North Carolina Justice Center

PathWaysPA

Restaurant Opportunities Centers United

RESULTS

Service Employees International Union

Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, Inc. (New Jersey)

Take Care Net

Union of Rutgers Administrators, AFT Local 1766

United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW)

United Steelworkers International Union

Voices for America's Children

Washington State Family Leave Coalition

Wider Opportunities for Women

Women Employed

Women's Research & Education Institute (WREI)

BACKGROUND:

The national economic crisis is taking an enormous toll on families. The unprecedented job losses have made women's earnings more critical to families and to the economy. For both women and men, losing a job or a paycheck today can be catastrophic and can add demands on already strained state services.

The economic upheaval has exacerbated the predicament millions of workers face of having to risk their jobs in order to care for their families, or put their loved ones at risk in order to do their jobs. Workplace standards still reflect a 20th century assumption of a father with a full-time job and a stay-at-home wife. The 21st century reality is that most parents are in the workforce, most families need two incomes to be financially secure, many families depend solely on women's incomes, and workers have care giving responsibilities for extended family and community members. In fact,

- **Nearly half the private sector workforce has no paid sick days for routine illnesses.**
- **More than half do not qualify for unpaid leave under the Family & Medical Leave Act.**
- **The vast majority of all workers have no wage replacement if they need to take extended leave for serious illness or to care for a new child.**
- **Millions of workers have no control over their schedule.**
- **Part time workers have lower wages, fewer benefits, and even weaker government protections.**

We need new enforceable workplace standards that provide all employees with paid sick days, family and medical leave with job protection and wage replacement, more control over schedules to meet care giving responsibilities, and part-time work

with parity in wage and benefits. These changes should apply to families at all income levels and of all types, including those headed by same sex-couples. In addition to removing barriers for women in the workplace, the new standards would greatly reduce poverty, enhance economic security and have other positive impacts including:

- **Enabling all workers to fulfill family and care giving responsibilities and achieve a decent life;**
- **Boosting worker productivity, increasing job retention and business profitability;**
- **Preventing the spread of contagious diseases and promoting public health;**
- **Improving infant and child health and reducing infant mortality;**
- **Ensuring that all children have a foundation for strong social and intellectual development and success in school;**
- **Enhancing senior health and independence;**
- **Reducing overall healthcare costs by expanding access to preventive and primary care and better management of chronic conditions.**

These measures are an integral part of a broader effort to rebuild family economic security and a prosperous economy. The broader agenda includes a higher, indexed minimum wage; high-quality childcare, preschool, and public education with well-trained and well-compensated teachers; affordable and high quality health care; protection and expansion of workers' rights to join a union and bargain collectively through passage of the Employee Free Choice Act; a modernized unemployment insurance system; a strong safety net with expanded work supports; pay equity across gender and race; retirement security; and protection of workers rights through guaranteed jury trials and meaningful relief.



The Valuing Families at Work **Agenda:**

1 **GOAL 1 – SUPPORTING STRONG AND HEALTHY FAMILIES:**

All workers should have paid sick days that can be used for preventative care and minor illnesses for themselves and their loved ones. All workers should have access to paid time off to attend their children's school activities and to address the effects of domestic violence, stalking or sexual assault.

- Congress should pass, and the President should sign, the **Healthy Families Act**, to give millions of workers access to 7 paid sick and safe days a year to care for themselves, their family members, and to address issues arising out of domestic violence, stalking and sexual assault.
- Lawmakers should extend access to paid sick and safe days to all workers regardless of employer size.

2 **GOAL 2 – MAKING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE FULLY ACCESSIBLE:**

All workers should have job-protected family and medical leave and family and medical leave insurance that provides meaningful wage replacement for the handful of times in their careers when they need extended time off to care for a new child, a family or household member with a serious health condition, or their own serious health condition.

- Congress should pass and the President should sign the **Airline Flight Crew Technical Correction Act** to allow flight crews access to unpaid FMLA leave.
- Congress should pass and the President should sign **The Supporting Military Families Act**. The legislation would extend up to 26 weeks of unpaid leave to family members of injured veterans for five years after the veteran leaves service, provided the veteran develops a service-related injury or illness that was incurred, or, in the case of an existing injury, was aggravated, while on active duty.
- Congress should pass, and the President should sign the **Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act** to provide 4 weeks of paid leave for federal workers after the birth or adoption of a child.
- Congress should pass and the President should sign the **FIRST Act** to help states finance the creation of family and medical leave insurance programs, or lawmakers should create a national paid family and medical leave program.

- Congress should update the FMLA to remove discrimination against part-time workers; lower the employer-size threshold to 15; expand the definition of family to a broader range of members including domestic partners and their children; allow FMLA leave to be used to attend school meetings and to address the effects of domestic violence, stalking and sexual assault; and ensure that the regulations for the statute allow workers to take the leave to which they are entitled.

3 **GOAL 3 – FACILITATING FAIR WORK SCHEDULES:**

All workers should have the right, without giving up current labor protections or rights achieved through collective bargaining agreements, to greater control over their own work schedules so that, consistent with business needs, they can meet their care giving responsibilities. Such policies would include varying start and end times, advance notice of schedules, the right to refuse mandatory overtime, and the right to vacation time. Part-time workers should have the right to parity in wages, benefits and government protections.

- Congress should develop and pass a worker schedule bill, allowing workers greater flexibility and more control over their schedules so that they can meet their family responsibilities.
- Congress should develop and pass a part-time parity and protection bill, guaranteeing equity for part-time workers.

For more information on the **Valuing Families Agenda**, contact *Ellen Bravo*, bravo@uwm.edu, or *Steffany Stern*, sstern@nationalpartnership.org, or go to these websites: www.familyvaluesatwork.org, www.nationalpartnership.org