

# Work and Family Agenda for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress

JUNE 2013

Every day, workers in the United States struggle to meet the demands of work and family because their workplaces lack basic family friendly policies. It is past time for workplaces to reflect the needs of today's families, which include the ability to care for children, family members and elderly relatives while being productive, responsible employees.

The National Partnership for Women & Families is leading the fight for policies that make our nation and its workplaces more family friendly. Because when women do better, families do better and our nation prospers.

## Paid Sick Days

Nearly 40 million private sector workers in the United States cannot earn a single paid sick day to recover from common, short-term illnesses. Without paid sick days, workers are forced to make impossible choices when illness strikes: stay home, lose pay and risk their jobs; or go to work sick, risk their health and spread disease to their co-workers and communities. A national paid sick days standard would help working families meet their health and financial needs while boosting business productivity and improving worker retention.

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**Three-quarters of adults support a law that would allow workers to earn a minimum number of paid sick days – and nine in 10 favor a specific proposal that would provide up to seven paid sick days per year.**

— *Paid Sick Days: Attitudes and Experiences.*  
National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, 2010

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**The National Partnership encourages members of Congress to support the Healthy Families Act, which would create a national paid sick days standard.**

- ▶ **The Healthy Families Act** (H.R. 1286/S. 631) would allow workers in businesses with 15 or more employees to **earn up to seven job-protected paid sick days each year** to be used to recover from their own illnesses, access preventive care or provide care for a sick family member.

## Paid Family and Medical Leave Programs

A mere 11 percent of workers in the United States have access to paid family leave through their employers, and less than 40 percent have access to employer-provided, short-term disability insurance. Yet, at some point in their lives, nearly all workers will need to take

time away from work to deal with a serious personal or family illness or to care for a new child. Laws that provide *paid* family and medical leave allow workers to meet these needs without jeopardizing their economic security.

**The National Partnership encourages members of Congress to support proposals that would provide access to paid family and medical leave.**

- ▶ **A national family and medical leave insurance program** would allow workers to earn a portion of their pay while they take a limited amount of time away from work to care for a new child; care for a family member with a serious health condition; or address their own serious health conditions.
- ▶ **A state paid leave fund** within the U.S. Department of Labor would provide competitive grants to states to establish paid leave programs.
- ▶ **The Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act** (H.R. 517) would provide four weeks of paid parental leave to federal workers while they are on FMLA leave for the birth or adoption of a child.

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**Nearly eight in 10 U.S. adults (78 percent) say that family and maternity leave is a “very important” labor standard for workers.**

— *Paid Sick Days: Attitudes and Experiences.*  
National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, 2010

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## Expanding the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

2013 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the FMLA – the only federal law that helps working men and women meet the dual demands of work and family. The National Partnership is proud to have led the fight for its enactment. This groundbreaking legislation has been used more than 100 million times by workers who have taken time off to care for their families or their own serious health conditions. The FMLA was an important start, but the law has significant gaps that leave roughly half of workers ineligible for leave, and it fails to recognize that workers today care for siblings, grandparents and other close relatives who are not currently covered by the FMLA.

**The National Partnership urges members of Congress to support the following bills that would expand access to the FMLA.**

- ▶ **Family and Medical Leave Inclusion Act** (H.R. 1751/S. 846) would expand the definition of family member to allow FMLA leave to care for a domestic partner, parent-in-law, adult child, sibling, grandchild or grandparent.
- ▶ **Part-Time Worker Bill of Rights Act** (H.R. 675) eliminates the hours-worked requirement (currently employees who work 1,250 hours within the last 12 months are eligible) under the FMLA to extend FMLA protections to part-time workers.
- ▶ **Parental Bereavement Act** (H.R. 515/S. 226) would amend the FMLA to entitle an eligible employee to up to 12 weeks of leave to grieve the death of a son or daughter.

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The National Partnership for Women & Families is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy group dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace, access to quality health care and policies that help women and men meet the dual demands of work and family. More information is available at [www.NationalPartnership.org](http://www.NationalPartnership.org).

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