

Cosponsor Paid Parental Leave for Federal Employees

February 12, 2009



Dear Senator:

On behalf of the more than 100,000 bipartisan members of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I **urge you to cosponsor the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act of 2009 (S. 354)**. This legislation provides federal employees four weeks of paid leave for the birth or adoption of a child – an important benefit that will help the government recruit and retain dedicated and talented workers, as well as set an important standard for U.S. employers.

AAUW has long supported flexible workplace policies to address the family responsibilities of all employees. AAUW's 2007-2009 Public Policy Program supports "greater availability of and access to benefits and policies that create a family-friendly workplace environment," which are critical for women for "equitable access and advancement in employment."¹ AAUW efforts in this area include long-term advocacy from 1983 to 1992 to pass the Family and Medical Leave Act, which was finally signed into law in 1993. Unfortunately, while the Family and Medical Leave Act protects the jobs of workers during a myriad of family circumstances, including care for a new child, there is currently no federal policy for paid parental leave in the United States. Further, the Economic Policy Institute found that the United States is the only one of 19 countries with comparable per capita income to not require nor offer paid parental leave.²

In 2005, the Families and Work Institute released a study examining employers who offer maternity leave in addition to paid vacation and sick time. The results showed that 46 percent provide paid parental leave for new mothers. Only 13 percent do the same for new fathers, and when that window of maternity leave is at least 6 weeks long, only 7 percent offer pay for new mothers.³ The sad reality is that a majority of new parents do not have paid parental leave.

The Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act of 2009 (FEPPLA) will improve the family/work balance of the over 2.7 million federal employees by providing for some paid parental leave. Not only will this legislation allow new mothers to take paid leave, without using a cobbled together combination of paid vacation time and sick days, it will also encourage new fathers to spend time with their new children – an approach that, much like the Family and Medical Leave Act, helps combat gender discrimination and insidious stereotypes about gender roles. In addition, FEPPLA will help the federal government gain and retain valuable employees. Because the cost of employee turnover is more expensive than providing paid leave, this policy just makes sense. A meta-analysis by the Joint Economic Committee found that the average cost of turnover is about 20 percent of an employee's annual salary.⁴ The leave provided in this bill is less than 8 percent of an employee's salary.

Clearly, this family friendly policy is not just good for families, it's good for business. Again, I **urge you to cosponsor the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act of 2009 (S. 354)**. Please contact Adam Schiff (202/224-4024 or Adam.Schiff@webb.senate.gov) in Sen. Jim Webb's office to cosponsor. Votes associated with these issues may be included in the AAUW Congressional Voting Record for the 111th Congress. If you have any questions, please contact me at 202/785-7720, or Tracy Sherman, government relations manager, at 202/785-7730.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa M. Maatz".

Lisa M. Maatz
Director, Public Policy and Government Relations

¹ American Association of University Women. (July 2007). *2007 – 09 AAUW Public Policy Program*. Retrieved December 6, 2007, from http://www.aauw.org/advocacy/issue_advocacy/upload/2007-09-PPP-brochure.pdf

² Shierholz, Heidi and Emily Garr. (May 7, 2008). *Economic Snapshots: Paid maternity leave still on the wishlist for many US mothers*. Economic Policy Institute. Retrieved June 17, 2008 from http://www.epi.org/content.cfm/webfeatures_snapshots_20080507.

³ Bond, James, Ellen Galinsky, Stacy Kim, and Erin Brownfield. (October 2005). *2005 National Study of Employers. Families and Work Institute*. Retrieved June 17, 2008 from <http://familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/2005nse.pdf>.

⁴ Joint Economic Committee, U.S. Congress. (Forthcoming). <http://jec.senate.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=Home.Home>.