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## FEW Fact Sheet

### Equal Rights Amendment

**Background:** Federally Employed Women (FEW) Leaders, Regional Managers and Legislative Chairs are asking legislators to co-sponsor and support legislation to add the Equal Rights Amendment to the US Constitution:

***“Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”***

Priority should be given to passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) since full legal equality under the United States Constitution is essential for women to be equal partners and participants in our society. Once three more states ratify the ERA, a three-fifths majority of the 50 states would have been secured. Many of these targeted states have begun moving the amendment forward and through their respective congresses.

**Status:** Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-14-NY) introduced HJRes 61 which proposes an amendment to the US Constitution that provides equal rights for men and women.

**FEW’s Position and Further Action:** FEW advocates full constitutional rights for women, and the enactment of the ERA. This organization has joined forces with a coalition of groups to achieve a full consideration and review of this Amendment. Our members ask legislators to co-sponsor and support this bill and help ensure that it moves expeditiously through the legislative process.

***Thank you for your support of equality in the workplace  
for the one million federally employed women.***

**If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact FEW’s Washington Representative at 703-528-7822 or via email at [janetk@few.org](mailto:janetk@few.org).**



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## ***Social Security/Pension Benefits***

**Background:** A major challenge of our time is to protect retirement security for all of our citizens and women in particular. Older women are one of the fastest growing poverty populations in our nation today. Traditionally women have earned less than men, and they currently earn about 76 cents for every \$1 that men earn. Furthermore, women are more likely to spend time out of the workforce (about 12 years) to tend to family caregiving responsibilities. That is time they are not earning a pension, vesting in a pension or contributing to Social Security. This absence from the paid workforce translates into inadequate retirement income and an increased financial dependency on their spouses.

Making the situation more severe for many federally employed women is the fact that they are penalized in their retirement benefits because of the Government Pension Offset (GPO). This law decreases by two-thirds whatever spousal social security benefits for which a retired government worker might be eligible.

The GPO, in effect, prohibits federal retirees from collecting both a full Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) annuity based upon his/her own government employment and full Social Security benefits based upon a spouse's employment. The victims of GPO are largely elderly women who are both CSRS annuitants and widows of private sector employees. Had these women spent their careers working for government contractors or anywhere else but the federal government, they would be entitled to full, unreduced Social Security spousal or survivor benefits.

Another provision – the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) – greatly reduces the Social Security benefits of a retired federal worker who paid into Social Security and also receives a government pension. Private sector retirees receive monthly Social Security checks equal to 90% of their first \$711 in average monthly career earnings. Federal retirees however only receive 40% of the first \$711 in career monthly earnings, a monthly penalty of \$355 simply for working for the federal government.

**Status:** Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA-28) introduced a bill (HR 235) that would repeal both unfair Social Security provisions. Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) has introduced a companion bill in the Senate (S 484).

**Federally Employed Women's (FEW) Position and Further Action:** FEW membership believes that both the GPO and WEP provisions should be repealed. We are asking legislators to co-sponsor these repeal bills and support them as they move through the legislative process.



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## FEW Fact Sheet

### Young Parents Need Access to Day Care

**Background:** Studies show that children in high quality day care programs perform better in math, language and reading and show fewer behavioral problems. Yet quality day care remains out of reach for hundreds of thousands of Americans especially during these lean economic times. To help ease the financial burden of these families and allow these children to receive the best care available, legislators introduced the “Right Start Child Care and Education Act of 2009.”

This legislation would:

- Increase the maximum federal child care tax credit for families from \$3,000 to \$6,000 per child.
- Increase the Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account from \$5,000 to \$7,500.
- Expand the tax credit from \$150,000 to \$225,000 for employers to construct workplace child care facilities.
- Provide a tax credit of up to \$2,000 a year for three years for college graduates who decide to enter the child care field.

The Dependent and Child Care Tax Credit has been increased only once in the last 25 years, while according to the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, between 2005-2006 the price of full-time child care increased by more than twice the rate of inflation. The current average price of full-time care for an infant in a licensed center can be as high as \$14,650 a year.

**Status:** Rep. “Dutch” Ruppensberger (D-2-MD) introduced the “Right Start Child Care and Education Act of 2009 (HR 460) in the House; Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) introduced a companion bill in the Senate (S 210). These bills have been referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means, and Senate Finance Committee, respectively.

**FEW’s Position and Further Action:** Federally Employed Women (FEW) supports legislation that eases the financial burden on families trying to provide quality day care for their children. Young parents should not have to choose between working and taking care of their children. As our nation grapples with the economic crisis by creating millions of new jobs, we must provide working parents with affordable, quality child care to enable them to accept these jobs. FEW asks all House and Senate legislators to co-sponsor these important bills and help move them through the legislative process.

**For more information, contact Janet Kopenhaver, FEW’s Washington Representative at 703-528-7822 or via email at [janetk@few.org](mailto:janetk@few.org)**



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## FEW Fact Sheet

### Paid Parental Leave for Federal Workers

**Background:** Currently new parents employed by the federal government can take up to 12 weeks leave upon the birth or adoption of a child provided they can afford it or have enough annual or sick leave to use. These 12 weeks of leave is unpaid.

Yet many federal workers cannot enjoy the birth or adoption of a new child because they cannot afford to take time off without pay. Providing them with paid leave would express our appreciation of the work they do, as well as stress the importance of spending more time with one's family.

Extra weeks of paid leave would relieve employees from having to use their sick or annual leave. It is an added benefit that not only will be a benefit for current employees, but also could attract many more potential employees to the federal government. Considering the large numbers of retirements expected over the next five years, we need to ensure that enough workers are employed with the federal government so that the essential services they provide to all Americans will not be interrupted – from Social Security disbursements to protecting our nation to mail delivery to helping the needy. Our federal workforce allows us all to obtain the services we need in our everyday lives.

**Status:** Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-14-NY) introduced HR 626 that provides four weeks of paid leave for federal workers following the birth or adoption of a child. This bill has passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 258-154. Sen. Jim Webb (D-VA) has introduced a companion bill in the Senate (S 354).

**FEW's Position and Further Action:** Federally Employed Women (FEW) supports legislation that would create a new category of paid leave – separate from annual or sick leave – for employees after the birth or adoption of a child. FEW is asking Senators to co-sponsor S 354 and help ensure it moves through the Congress. FEW thanks those Representatives who voted for the bill in the House.

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