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## FEW Fact Sheet

### Senior Executive Service Diversity Assurance Act (S 2148/HR 3774)

**Background:** FEW Leaders, Regional Managers and Legislative Chairs are asking Members of Congress to co-sponsor the Senior Executive Service Diversity Assurance Act (S 2148/HR 3774) that will establish within the Office of Personnel Management a “Senior Executive Service Resource Office” to ensure that the Senior Executive Service (SES) reflects the nation’s diversity. The office will have the responsibility and the power to prescribe regulations and provide guidance to agencies concerning the structure, management and diverse composition of the SES.

The legislation also establishes programs to recruit women, ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities at the interagency and collegiate level. The latest statistics show that women represented 47.1% of the federal workforce; yet they only accounted for 28.7% of the career SES employees and 34.8% of all employees in grades 13 through 15. In 2003, 26.2% of the SES force was women. Increasing the ranks of women in the SES by 2% over four years is simply not good enough. This bill will help increase those numbers.

**Status:** Chairmen Daniel Akaka (D-HI) and Danny Davis (D-IL) have introduced these Diversity bills in their respective congressional chambers. The goal is to obtain as many co-sponsors as possible and move these bills forward.

**FEW Position and Further Action:** FEW actively supports these bills, and our president testified twice on Capitol Hill about the need for such legislation. On behalf of the one million federally employed women (both civilian and military), we are asking legislators to co-sponsor these bills.

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

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



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### Paid Parental Leave for Federal Workers (S 80/HR 3799)

**Background:** Currently new parents employed by the federal government can take up to 12 weeks off 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 ones' family.

Extra weeks of paid leave would relieve employees from having to use their sick or annual leave. Also it is an added benefit that not only will be a boon for current employees, but 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.

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.

**Status:** Sen. Ted Stevens (AK-R) has introduced the “Family Leave Act” (S 80) that would provide for 8 weeks of paid leave for female federal workers following the birth of a child; 5 days leave for the child’s father; and 5 days leave for parents of newly adopted children. Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-14-NY) introduced a companion bill in the House (HR 3799) that also provides 8 weeks of paid leave for federal workers following the birth or adoption of a child.

**Further Action:** We are asking legislators to co-sponsor these Paid Parental Leave bills, and support them as they move through the legislative process.

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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. Plus, women have traditionally earned less than men, and they currently earn about 74 cents for every \$1 that men earn. Additionally, women are more likely to spend time out of the workforce (about 12 years) to tend to family care giving responsibilities. That is time she is 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 worse for many federally employed women is the fact that they are penalized in their retirement benefits due to 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 \$680 in average monthly career earnings. Federal retirees however only receive 40% of the first \$680 in career monthly earnings, a monthly penalty of \$408 simply for working for the federal government.

**Status:** Rep. Howard Berman (CA-28-R) has introduced HR 82 that would reform the Social Security Act by repealing the GPO and WEP; Sen. Dianne Feinstein (CA-D) introduced a companion bill in the Senate (S 206). In addition, Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (TX-R) and Rep. Kevin Brady (TX-R) introduced the Public Servant Retirement Protection Act (S 1647/HR 2772) in each of their respective chambers which repeals the WEP and replaces it with a more fair benefits formula.

**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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## A BRIEF HISTORY OF FEW

In 1967 Executive Order (E.O.) 11375 was established with the purpose of adding "sex" to the forms of discrimination prohibited within the federal government and by federal contractors. A few months after the issuance of Executive Order (E.O.) 11375, a group of federal women from all over the United States met in Washington, D.C. at the "Seminar for Executive Women" sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Although these women believed that a significant step had been taken in the issuance of E.O. 11375, they were concerned about what would happen if the Civil Service Commission and the individual agencies did not put forth vigorous efforts during the implementation stages of the program. So, in 1968, a group of these women met to form a private organization to make sure E.O. 11375 was given the effort it deserved. The organization's name was to be **Federally Employed Women (FEW)**.

## WHAT IS FEW?

FEW is a private, non-profit organization founded in 1968. The early organizers of FEW realized that the government could dismantle the Federal Women's Program (FWP), and they wanted to ensure that there would always be an organization dedicated to promoting equality for women and addressing concerns of women in the Federal workforce. Additionally, because FWP is a government function, it is limited in its political scope and cannot lobby Congress. As a private organization, FEW is not restricted in this area.

As a private organization, FEW works as a constructive advocacy group to improve the status of women employed by the Federal government. This includes contact with Congress to encourage progressive legislation. FEW national officers also meet with agency officials at all levels to demonstrate support of the FWP, encourage officials to support the program and to obtain insight on the effectiveness of the FWP at agency and local levels.

## WHAT FEW IS NOT

FEW is not a labor organization, and therefore does not *"represent"* employees. However, FEW officers can and do meet with management officials to discuss matters that fall within their field of interest. Managers and EEO officials may join FEW and hold chapter, region, or national office positions. There is no conflict between being an employee of the FWP and joining FEW. In fact, persons officially charged with FWP responsibilities often work with FEW officers and members to develop goals and objectives for agency programs designed to meet the agency's needs and to ensure the equality of opportunity for women in the Federal workforce.

