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FEW Salutes House for Passing Paid Parental Leave Bill (HR 626); Urges Senate to Follow Suit

(Washington, D.C.) Federally Employed Women (FEW) salutes the House of Representatives for passing HR 626, the Paid Parental Leave Act sponsored by Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-14-NY). "Passage of a Paid Parental Leave bill is a top legislative priority of FEW's," stated Sue Webster, FEW's National President. "This measure will greatly help attract and retain younger workers to the federal government to take the positions of the vast numbers of retirees expected to leave over the next five years," Webster added. FEW is now calling on the Senate to do the right thing and pass the bill in the Senate and send the measure to the President for signature.

The legislation provides four weeks of paid leave for federal workers following the birth or adoption of a child. Currently federal employees must use annual or sick leave to be with their new children. "Quite simply, new parents should be with their children and enjoy one of the most important moments in their lives," Cecelia Davis, FEW's National Vice President for Congressional Relations asserted. "They deserve these four weeks of paid leave to ensure that their children receive all the needed attention and doctors' visits essential to the child's healthy beginning," she concluded.

This employee benefit would not only help current federal employees, but also would be a great new incentive for younger generations to work for the federal government. Without new employees entering the federal workforce, many services that we all rely on might have to be cut back including mail delivery, Social Security assistance and help for our nation's most needy. According to a March 2004 report by the Office of Personnel Management, 58 percent of supervisory and 48 percent of non-supervisory workers will be eligible to retire by the end of fiscal year 2010.

There is an added burden in attracting new employees because of competition with the private sector that on average pays more than the federal government. Therefore, employment benefits in the federal government must be at least comparable to the private sector. More than 50 percent of companies in the United States offer some type of parental leave and nearly all Fortune 100 firms offer working parents some paid time off when they have a child.

"The United States is the only industrialized nation that does not guarantee paid leave upon the birth or adoption of a child," advised Janet Kopenhaver, FEW's Washington Representative. "Yet this bill is pay-go neutral and will actually save the government money by reducing

turnover and replacement costs which are estimated to be 25 percent of the worker's salary," added Kopenhaver.

FEW is a private, non-profit organization founded in 1968 after Executive Order 11375 was issued that added sex discrimination to the list of prohibited discrimination in the federal government. FEW has grown into a proactive organization serving more than one million federally employed women—both in the military and civilian workforce.

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