



PROTECT *America's Heartbeat*



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NARFE and FEW Urge Congress to Follow Pentagon's Lead on Paid Parental Leave, Go One Step Further

Alexandria, VA – Richard G. Thissen, national president of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE), and Michelle Crockett, national president of Federally Employed Women (FEW), applauded the recently announced change in military family leave policy and urged Congress to follow the Department of Defense's lead and support federal employees and their families by passing paid parental leave legislation.

Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter announced January 28 that DOD is increasing paid maternity leave to 12 weeks for women across the joint force.

“The Pentagon is instituting policy that FEW and other organizations have been seeking from Congress for years,” stated Crockett. “Providing servicewomen paid time off to care for their newborns shows that DOD understands that if it wants to retain these talented military personnel, it needs to provide benefits that support military families. If the Pentagon can provide paid parental leave to its personnel, the rest of the federal government should be able to as well.”

Currently, federal employees receive no paid parental leave and must use available vacation or sick leave. NARFE and FEW support the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act, which would provide six weeks of paid leave to federal employees for the birth, adoption or foster placement of a child. H.R. 532, introduced in the House by Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-NY, and S. 2033, introduced in the Senate by Sens. Brian Schatz, D-HI, and Barbara Mikulski, D-MD, are not expected to increase deficits, according to preliminary estimates by the Congressional Budget Office.

“While we welcome the new policy announced by Secretary Carter, it provides only 14 days of paid leave for the fathers of newborns. While that may make sense for the Pentagon, we urge Congress to provide parity when it comes to parents and pass legislation providing paid parental leave for all parents,” said Thissen.

FEW and NARFE surveyed the members of FEW on what paid parental leave would mean for them, their families and their dedication to serving the American people through federal service. Hundreds of women serving in the federal government responded. The results clearly showed a need for the federal government to join with the rest of the industrialized world in providing this benefit.



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“I was a single mom and a fairly new federal employee with little to no leave when my son was born in 1994. I was placed on bed rest and could not work prior to delivery, and returned

to work six weeks postpartum. My son then was hospitalized at eight weeks old. Hearing your supervisor ask, ‘What do you want to do about your leave?’ while standing in a hospital room with a sick 8-week-old infant was just shocking. I could have quit right then and there, but I didn’t because I am a dedicated federal employee. But I shouldn’t have had to choose between my son and my career,” commented Kim Kirkpatrick, FEW national vice president for congressional relations.

“Paid parental leave is long overdue, and federal employees deserve the work/life balance that employees in so many other countries enjoy. To think that my experience was 21 years ago but could still happen to someone today is appalling,” Kirkpatrick said.

Thissen noted that the United States is the only industrialized country that does not offer its civil service employees any paid time off after the birth or adoption of a child. “Offering paid parental leave also is about competing with other employers,” he added. “Increasingly, we are seeing private-sector companies offering paid parental leave, and without its own policy in place, federal agencies will not be able to attract and retain the top-level employees it needs,” he concluded.

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The [National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association \(NARFE\)](#), one of America’s oldest and largest associations, was founded in 1921 with the mission of protecting the earned rights and benefits of America’s active and retired federal workers. The largest federal employee/retiree organization, NARFE represents the interests of nearly five million current and future federal annuitants, spouses and survivors.

[Federally Employed Women](#) 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.