

# Federal Employee Paid Leave Act

MARCH 2019

America's working people should be able to take time to address their own health needs, care for a loved one or welcome a new child. But millions must make impossible choices between caring for themselves or their family and their economic security. Federal workers are among those who do not have paid family and medical leave. Being forced to forego a paycheck to care for a personal medical issue, a family member or a new child puts a terrible burden on federal workers and their families – and, as a result, the federal government and taxpayers suffer.

## Supporting a Family Friendly Federal Workforce

As the nation's largest employer, with more than 2 million employees throughout the country,<sup>1</sup> the federal government should be a leader in establishing family friendly workplace policies. Yet it does not currently provide *any* long-term paid family and medical leave.

The Federal Employee Paid Leave Act would provide 12 weeks of paid time off for the birth, adoption or foster placement of a new child; to care for a spouse, child or parent; for particular military caregiving and leave purposes; and for personal health reasons to federal workers who are eligible for unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The Act would not provide employees with additional leave time; it would simply allow federal employees to receive pay during their 12 weeks of FMLA leave.

## Saving Money for the Federal Government and Retaining Valued Workers

**Providing paid leave could yield significant government savings through reduced employee turnover and replacement costs, including at least \$50 million per year for parental leave.<sup>2</sup>**

- Worker turnover declines and loyalty increases when workers are able to use paid leave. First-time mothers with access to paid maternity leave are more likely to return to work after the birth of their child.<sup>3</sup>

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**PROVIDING PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE WOULD SAVE THE GOVERNMENT MONEY BY REDUCING TURNOVER COSTS AND HELP GOVERNMENT EMPLOYERS RECRUIT AND RETAIN TALENTED WORKERS.**

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- Retaining workers saves money because replacing them is expensive. Turnover costs are estimated to be between 16 and 200 percent of a worker’s annual salary.<sup>4</sup>
- The federal government could prevent the departure of 2,650 female employees per year by offering paid parental leave.<sup>5</sup>

**Paid leave would help the federal government attract and retain valuable and much-needed younger workers.**

- The federal workforce is aging. In 2017, the number of full-time federal employees older than 50 years old was nearly eight times the number under 30.<sup>6</sup> In some agencies, more than half of senior staff are eligible to retire.<sup>7</sup> Older workers need time to care for their own medical concerns and the exodus of baby-boom workers will create a recruitment challenge for the federal government.
- Paid leave appeals to younger workers who are less likely to have accrued significant amounts of sick or vacation time and will be more likely to be forced to choose between a paycheck and caring for a new child or aging parents.
- An increase in satisfaction with family friendly policies reduces turnover intention by 37.5 percent in federal agencies.<sup>8</sup>
- Leading companies offer employees paid time off when they have a new child or need to care for themselves or their families.<sup>9</sup> In order to attract the best and brightest talent, the federal government should provide comparable benefits.

**Paid leave is critical for the health and well-being of families.**

- Employees at federal agencies that offer family friendly policies are more likely to report satisfaction managing work and family responsibilities, as well as overall job satisfaction.<sup>10</sup>
- Enabling working mothers and fathers to care for and bond with a new baby lays the foundation for healthy child development. Children who form strong emotional bonds or “attachment” with their parents are more likely to do well in school and have positive relationships with others.<sup>11</sup>
- Paid leave also lets people help older family members recover from serious illnesses, fulfill treatment plans, and avoid complications and hospital readmissions.<sup>12</sup>

**It Is Past Time for Paid Leave**

The Federal Employee Paid Leave Act would give federal workers economic security and allow them to be there for their families without worrying about missing a paycheck.

A large and growing body of research – and the experiences of millions of workers and businesses – show that policies that enable workers to care for themselves and their families without risking their jobs or economic security are good for workers, families, businesses and our economy. It is well past time that our nation truly honors families. It’s time for the Federal Employee Paid Leave Act.

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- <sup>1</sup> Partnership for Public Service. (n.d.). *Fed Figures*. Retrieved 21 February 2019, from <https://ourpublicservice.org/research/fed-figures/>
- <sup>2</sup> Miller, K., Suppan Helmuth, A., & Farabee-Siers, R. (2009). *The Need for Paid Parental Leave for Federal Employees: Adapting to a Changing Workforce*. Retrieved 21 February 2019, from Institute for Women's Policy Research website: <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/wpallimport/files/iwpr-export/publications/FEPLAExecSumm.pdf>
- <sup>3</sup> Laughlin, L. (2011, October). Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns of First-Time Mothers: 1961-2008. *Current Population Report*. Retrieved 21 February 2019, from <http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/p70-128.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> Boushey, H., & Glynn, S. J. (2012, November 16). *There Are Significant Business Costs to Replacing Employees*. Retrieved 21 February 2019 from Center for American Progress website: <http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/CostofTurnover.pdf>
- <sup>5</sup> See note 2.
- <sup>6</sup> Partnership for Public Service. (2017). *Preparing for the Federal Workforce of the Future*. Retrieved 21 February 2019, from <https://ourpublicservice.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/e0fe01ed96f44ecba261a1f89b628356-1522350873.pdf>
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Kim, J., & Wiggins, M. E. (2011, September). Family-Friendly Human Resource Policy: Is It Still Working in the Public Sector?. *Public Administration Review*, 71(5), 728-739.
- <sup>9</sup> National Partnership for Women & Families. (2018, April). *Leading on Leave: Companies with New or Expanded Paid Leave Policies (2015-2018)*. Retrieved 21 February 2019, from <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/workplace/paid-leave/new-and-expanded-employer-paid-family-leave-policies.pdf>
- <sup>10</sup> See note 8.
- <sup>11</sup> National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2007). *The Timing and Quality of Early Experiences Combine to Shape Brain Architecture: Working Paper No. 5*. Retrieved 21 February 2019, from <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/the-timing-and-quality-of-early-experiences-combine-to-shape-brain-architecture/>; Zigler, E., Muenchow, S., & Ruhm, C. J. (2012). *Time Off With Baby: The Case for Paid Care Leave*. Washington, DC: ZERO TO THREE.
- <sup>12</sup> See e.g., Institute of Medicine. (2008, April 11). *Retooling for an Aging America: Building the Health Care Workforce*, 254. Retrieved 21 February 2019, from <http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/reports/2008/retooling-for-an-aging-america-building-the-health-care-workforce.aspx>; Arbaje, A. I., Wolff, J. L., Yu, Q., Powe, N. R., Anderson, G. F., Boulton, C. (2008, August). Postdischarge Environmental and Socioeconomic Factors and the Likelihood of Early Hospital Readmission Among Community-Dwelling Medicare Beneficiaries. *The Gerontologist*, 48(4), 495-504. Retrieved 21 February 2019, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18728299>

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