

AAUW CAPITOL HILL LOBBY CORPS
Healthy Families Act (H.R. 1542)
4/10/2008

I. SUMMARY

Message: Please become a cosponsor of the Healthy Families Act.

The Healthy Families Act (H.R. 1542) would guarantee workers seven paid sick days a year. This would benefit 66 million Americans: 46 million would gain access to paid sick days; 19 million would gain paid sick days for leave for doctors' visits and family care; and 1 million Americans would gain additional paid sick days.

II. BACKGROUND

Paid Sick Leave

AAUW has long supported flexible workplace policies to address the family responsibilities of employees. Offering workers the option of taking time off when a family member is sick is not just good for families, it's good for business. At least 145 countries worldwide provide paid sick days, with 127 providing a week or more annually. More than 79 countries provide sickness benefits for at least 26 weeks or until recovery.¹ But many hardworking Americans do not have access to the important benefit of paid sick leave. In fact, just under half (43 percent) of the private sector workforce has no paid sick days.² Low-wage workers are especially hard hit, with about half receiving no paid sick days.³ Further, 27 percent of low income women put off getting health-care because they cannot take time off from work and 18 percent of women at all income levels face this situation.⁴ More than 22 million working women do not have paid sick days,⁵ and as a result half of working mothers report that they must miss work and often go without pay when caring for a sick child.⁶ Lastly, with more than a third of Americans already experiencing significant elder care responsibilities,⁷ coupled with the aging of the baby boomers, the problem is likely to worsen in the years ahead.

Without sick days, employees often come to work ill, decreasing productivity and infecting coworkers. Further, families with children are often confronted with difficult choices. For the 86 million Americans who do not have paid sick days,⁸ a decision to stay home to care for a sick child or family member could jeopardize their job or family income. Elder care responsibilities also affect nearly four in ten adults, and this number is likely to grow higher as nearly two-thirds of Americans under age 60 expect to be responsible for the care of an elderly relative in 2008.⁹

For these reasons, AAUW supports legislation like the Healthy Families Act. The bill provides full-time employees with seven paid sick days a year to be used for their own

medical needs or to tend to the medical needs of a child, spouse or parent. Part-time employees would receive a pro-rated share of paid sick days.

III. TALKING POINTS

Paid sick days are crucial for working women:

- More than 22 million working women do not have paid sick days.¹⁰
- 47 percent of women working in the private sector do not have paid sick days¹¹
- In the industries that employ the most women – retail trade and accommodations/food service – almost 9 million women do not have paid sick days.¹²
- 27 percent of low-income women put off getting health-care because they cannot take time off from work. 18 percent of women in all income brackets face this situation.¹³

Women are still the primary family caregivers:

- 80 percent of mothers assume primary responsibility in the family for selecting their children's doctor, taking children to doctor's appointments, and arranging for their children's follow-up care.¹⁴
- 40 percent of working mothers lack both sick and vacation leave¹⁵
- 53 percent of working mothers cannot take days off for sick children¹⁶
- Half of working mothers must miss work when their child is sick with a minor illness (such as a cold or ear infection)¹⁷

Americans strongly support paid sick days:

The vast majority of Americans believe that working men and women deserve time off to balance their work responsibilities with their own, and their families' medical needs. According to the Senate HELP committee's research:

- Ninety-five percent of workers think it is "unacceptable" for an employer to refuse to provide sick days.
- Sixty percent of workers believe it is illegal not to provide sick days.
- Nearly half of American private-sector workers do not have paid sick days. Only one in three has paid sick days for doctors' appointments.
- The need is particularly urgent among lower-wage workers. In the lowest quarter of wage earners, 79 percent of workers have no paid sick days.
- Only one in three workers has paid sick days to care for a sick child. This means they must either lose a day's pay or send a child to school sick.

IV. WHAT THIS BILL WOULD ACCOMPLISH

The Healthy Families Act would guarantee most workers the right to 7 paid sick days to care for their own medical needs, as well as the medical needs of their families. The bill, which applies to employers with 15 or more employees:

- Guarantees paid sick days for an employee's medical condition; an employee's doctor's appointment, or other preventative or diagnostic treatment; and to care for a family member with comparable needs;
- Provides prorated leave for part-time employees working between 20 and 30 hours a week or between 1,000 and 1,500 hours a year;
- Allows employers to maintain existing policies that meet these standards, and encourage employers to provide greater benefits;
- Allows employers to request certification for leave for employees who request three or more consecutive days. Employers must keep health information confidential and separate from personnel files;
- Requires employers to post notice of the availability of paid sick leave and how to file an enforcement action;
- Allows an employee or the Secretary of Labor to enforce these rights in federal or state court;
- Requires a GAO study of how these paid sick leave policies are implemented and the benefits and costs to employers and employees of the leave.

V. ARGUMENTS FROM THE OPPOSITION

These new requirements would unfairly burden employers and affect businesses productivity.

Similar arguments were lodged against the Family and Medical Leave Act before it was passed. However, in January 2001, the bipartisan Commission on Family and Medical Leave released a study reporting that almost 90 percent of covered employers said that complying with FMLA brought no or minimal increase in their administrative costs.¹⁸ Further, while the vast majority of employers reported the FMLA had no impact on business practices, productivity, and outcomes, some employers reported cost savings associated with lowered employee turnover, as well as improved morale.¹⁹

These new requirements would cost employers too much, and affect companies' profits.

Paid sick days produce savings for businesses through decreased turnover and increased productivity. The Institute for Women's Policy Research estimates that the Healthy Families Act would result in a net savings, after covering costs of paid leave, of \$8 billion per year.

VI. STATUS

Introduced 3/15/2007 by Rep. Rosa DeLauro [D-CT]. Referred to the Committee on Education and Labor, subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions. 86 Cosponsors.

[Rep Abercrombie, Neil](#) [HI-1] - 6/22/2007
[Rep Allen, Thomas H.](#) [ME-1] - 3/15/2007
[Rep Baca, Joe](#) [CA-43] - 3/19/2007
[Rep Baldwin, Tammy](#) [WI-2] - 3/28/2007
[Rep Berman, Howard L.](#) [CA-28] - 5/24/2007
[Rep Bishop, Timothy H.](#) [NY-1] - 6/22/2007
[Rep Blumenauer, Earl](#) [OR-3] - 8/2/2007
[Rep Brown, Corrine](#) [FL-3] - 3/12/2008
[Rep Capps, Lois](#) [CA-23] - 8/2/2007
[Rep Capuano, Michael E.](#) [MA-8] - 11/8/2007
[Rep Carnahan, Russ](#) [MO-3] - 5/1/2007
[Rep Christensen, Donna M.](#) [VI] - 12/4/2007
[Rep Clarke, Yvette D.](#) [NY-11] - 3/12/2008
[Rep Clay, Wm. Lacy](#) [MO-1] - 7/12/2007
[Rep Cleaver, Emanuel](#) [MO-5] - 12/4/2007
[Rep Cohen, Steve](#) [TN-9] - 3/15/2007
[Rep Conyers, John, Jr.](#) [MI-14] - 8/3/2007
[Rep Cummings, Elijah E.](#) [MD-7] - 5/17/2007
[Rep Davis, Danny K.](#) [IL-7] - 11/15/2007
[Rep Davis, Susan A.](#) [CA-53] - 3/12/2008
[Rep Doyle, Michael F.](#) [PA-14] - 3/15/2007
[Rep Ellison, Keith](#) [MN-5] - 7/10/2007
[Rep Emanuel, Rahm](#) [IL-5] - 3/19/2007
[Rep Eshoo, Anna G.](#) [CA-14] - 1/23/2008
[Rep Filner, Bob](#) [CA-51] - 11/8/2007
[Rep Frank, Barney](#) [MA-4] - 7/17/2007
[Rep Green, Al](#) [TX-9] - 12/19/2007
[Rep Grijalva, Raul M.](#) [AZ-7] - 3/27/2007
[Rep Gutierrez, Luis V.](#) [IL-4] - 12/10/2007
[Rep Hare, Phil](#) [IL-17] - 6/22/2007
[Rep Hinchey, Maurice D.](#) [NY-22] - 5/17/2007
[Rep Hirono, Mazie K.](#) [HI-2] - 3/28/2007
[Rep Holt, Rush D.](#) [NJ-12] - 3/27/2007
[Rep Honda, Michael M.](#) [CA-15] - 5/1/2007
[Rep Jackson, Jesse L., Jr.](#) [IL-2] - 12/4/2007
[Rep Jackson-Lee, Sheila](#) [TX-18] - 12/4/2007
[Rep Kildee, Dale E.](#) [MI-5] - 11/15/2007
[Rep Kilpatrick, Carolyn C.](#) [MI-13] - 3/27/2007
[Rep Kucinich, Dennis J.](#) [OH-10] - 6/11/2007
[Rep Lantos, Tom](#) [CA-12] - 6/22/2007
[Rep Larson, John B.](#) [CT-1] - 3/27/2007
[Rep Lee, Barbara](#) [CA-9] - 11/15/2007
[Rep Lewis, John](#) [GA-5] - 3/29/2007
[Rep Lofgren, Zoe](#) [CA-16] - 9/6/2007
[Rep Lynch, Stephen F.](#) [MA-9] - 3/15/2007
[Rep Maloney, Carolyn B.](#) [NY-14] - 3/15/2007
[Rep Markey, Edward J.](#) [MA-7] - 12/4/2007
[Rep McCarthy, Carolyn](#) [NY-4] - 3/15/2007
[Rep McCollum, Betty](#) [MN-4] - 3/15/2007
[Rep McDermott, Jim](#) [WA-7] - 6/12/2007
[Rep McGovern, James P.](#) [MA-3] - 12/4/2007
[Rep McNulty, Michael R.](#) [NY-21] - 7/12/2007
[Rep Meek, Kendrick B.](#) [FL-17] - 9/27/2007
[Rep Michaud, Michael H.](#) [ME-2] - 7/17/2007
[Rep Miller, George](#) [CA-7] - 3/15/2007
[Rep Moore, Gwen](#) [WI-4] - 9/6/2007
[Rep Moran, James P.](#) [VA-8] - 3/19/2007
[Rep Murphy, Christopher S.](#) [CT-5] - 3/15/2007
[Rep Nadler, Jerrold](#) [NY-8] - 3/19/2007
[Rep Norton, Eleanor Holmes](#) [DC] - 7/26/2007
[Rep Oberstar, James L.](#) [MN-8] - 12/19/2007
[Rep Olver, John W.](#) [MA-1] - 3/15/2007
[Rep Pallone, Frank, Jr.](#) [NJ-6] - 3/27/2007
[Rep Pascrell, Bill, Jr.](#) [NJ-8] - 12/4/2007
[Rep Payne, Donald M.](#) [NJ-10] - 6/5/2007
[Rep Price, David E.](#) [NC-4] - 3/27/2007
[Rep Rangel, Charles B.](#) [NY-15] - 12/10/2007
[Rep Rothman, Steven R.](#) [NJ-9] - 11/8/2007
[Rep Roybal-Allard, Lucille](#) [CA-34] - 12/19/2007
[Rep Sanchez, Linda T.](#) [CA-39] - 7/17/2007
[Rep Schakowsky, Janice D.](#) [IL-9] - 3/19/2007
[Rep Schwartz, Allyson Y.](#) [PA-13] - 3/12/2008
[Rep Serrano, Jose E.](#) [NY-16] - 3/27/2007
[Rep Sestak, Joe](#) [PA-7] - 11/8/2007
[Rep Sires, Albio](#) [NJ-13] - 3/12/2008
[Rep Stark, Fortney Pete](#) [CA-13] - 3/27/2007
[Rep Sutton, Betty](#) [OH-13] - 7/10/2007
[Rep Towns, Edolphus](#) [NY-10] - 1/23/2008
[Rep Van Hollen, Chris](#) [MD-8] - 11/15/2007
[Rep Velazquez, Nydia M.](#) [NY-12] - 7/26/2007
[Rep Wasserman Schultz, Debbie](#) [FL-20] - 3/12/2008
[Rep Waxman, Henry A.](#) [CA-30] - 3/15/2007
[Rep Weiner, Anthony D.](#) [NY-9] - 12/18/2007
[Rep Wexler, Robert](#) [FL-19] - 5/1/2007
[Rep Woolsey, Lynn C.](#) [CA-6] - 3/15/2007
[Rep Wynn, Albert Russell](#) [MD-4] - 9/6/2007

VII. TARGETS

Dems on Ed and Labor and Blue Dog Dems

VIII. WHO TO ASK FOR : Labor LAs

¹ The Institute for Health and Social Policy. (2007). *The Work, Family, and Equity Index: How Does the United States Measure Up?* Retrieved January 15, 2008, from <http://www.mcjill.ca/files/ihsp/WFEIFinal2007.pdf>.

² U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (August 2007). *National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in Private Industry in the United States, March 2007*, Table 19. Retrieved January 16, 2008, from <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/sp/ebsm0006.pdf>.

³ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (August 2007). *National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in Private Industry in the United States, March 2007*, Table 19. Retrieved January 16, 2008, from <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/sp/ebsm0006.pdf>.

⁴ Salganicoff, Alina, Usha R. Ranji, and Roberta Wyn. (2005) *Women and Health Care: A National Profile*. Kaiser Family Foundation. Retrieved January 15, 2008 from <http://www.kff.org/womenshealth/7336.cfm>.

⁵ Institute for Women's Policy Research. (February 2007). *Women and Paid Sick Days: Crucial for Family Well-Being*. Retrieved January 15, 2008 from http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/B254_paidicksickdaysFS.pdf.

⁶ Kaiser Family Foundation. (April 2003). *Women, Work and Family Health: A Balancing Act*. Retrieved January 15, 2008 from <http://www.kff.org/womenshealth/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&PageID=14293>.

⁷ National Partnership for Women and Families. (June 2004). *Get Well Soon: Americans Can't Afford to Be Sick*. Accessed January 24, 2008 from <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/site/DocServer/GetWellSoonReport.pdf?docID=342>.

⁸ Lovell, Vicky. (May 2004). *No Time to be Sick: Why Everyone Suffers When Workers Don't Have Paid Sick Leave*. Institute for Women's Policy Research. Accessed January 5, 2008 from <http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/B242.pdf>.

⁹ National Partnership for Women and Families. (June 2004). *Get Well Soon: Americans Can't Afford to Be Sick*. Accessed January 24, 2008 from <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/site/DocServer/GetWellSoonReport.pdf?docID=342>.

¹⁰ Institute for Women's Policy Research. (February 2007). *Women and Paid Sick Days: Crucial for Family Well-Being*. Retrieved January 15, 2008 from http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/B254_paidicksickdaysFS.pdf.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Salganicoff, Alina, Usha R. Ranji, and Roberta Wyn. (2005) *Women and Health Care: A National Profile*. Kaiser Family Foundation. Retrieved January 15, 2008 from <http://www.kff.org/womenshealth/7336.cfm>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Heymann, Jody S. (October 2001). *The Widening Gap: Why America's Working Families are in Jeopardy and What Can Be Done About It*. New York: Basic Books. Fact sheet retrieved April 9, 2008 from <http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/heyman.pdf>.

¹⁶ Wyn, Roberta, and Ojeda, Victoria. (2003). *Women, Work, and Family Health: A Balancing Act*. Retrieved April 9, 2008 from <http://www.kff.org/womenshealth/3336-index.cfm>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ National Partnership for Women and Families. (2001) *Highlights of the 2000 U.S. Department of Labor Report*. Retrieved January 20, 2008 from <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/site/DocServer/2000DOLLaborReportHighlights.pdf?docID=954>.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (January 2001). *Balancing the Needs of Families and Employers: Family and Medical Leave Surveys*, Tables A2-6.12 and A2-6.19. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from <http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/fmla/fmla/APPX-A-2-TABLES.htm>.