

**Washington Family Leave Coalition
Press Release**

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**Gift of trees supports family leave:
Moms thank task force for work on family leave insurance**

OLYMPIA, WA – Mothers testifying at the Washington State Family Leave Insurance Joint Legislative Task Force presented trees adorned with messages thanking task force members for “helping Washington’s families grow stronger.”

“Most working parents can’t take time off from work to come down to Olympia to testify in support of family leave insurance,” said Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner, Executive Director of MomsRising, which organized the presentation, “but when you read a message from a parent that says ‘Paid maternity leave would make such a huge difference in our lives, and in the lives of our children...I hope and pray every day that it will become reality,’ it really hits home – Washington’s parents need family leave insurance, and we need to make it happen.”

Finkbeiner is encouraged by results from a two recent polls of frequent voters that showed strong support for a family leave insurance fund to provide income for parents on leave while caring for a newborn or newly-adopted child.

A new national poll conducted by Lake Research Partners found that three-quarters of respondents favored creating a family leave insurance fund through a small deduction from workers’ paychecks or a combination of worker and employer payments. A similar poll of Washington voters released in March 2007 pegged support for such a measure at 73%.

Strong support for family leave insurance was evident in virtually every demographic group and geographic region, even crossing party lines. Nationally, Democrats registered 81%, Independents 73%, and Republicans 69% in support; in Washington, 86% of Democrats, 67% of Independents, and 60% of Republicans were in favor.

“We’ve seen a huge jump in the percentage of mothers with children who are in the workforce, from just over half in 1975 to 75% today. About 1 in 4 families have responsibilities to care for an elderly relative, and those numbers will increase as our population ages,” according to Marilyn Watkins, Policy Director at the Economic Opportunity Institute, a non-profit, non-partisan research organization and member of the Washington Family Leave Coalition.

“Washington’s workplace policies need to respond to these dramatic shifts,” declared Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner, Executive Director of MomsRising, an advocacy group that supports family leave policies nationwide and member of the Washington task force, “otherwise we’re punishing mothers simply for being mothers, forcing them to mortgage their futures to take care of their babies. Parents should be able to care for their newborns joyfully, not under the threat of financial ruin.”

The Washington Family Leave Coalition includes organizations representing seniors, women, labor, health professionals, children’s advocates, faith communities, low-income workers, employers, and others. It advocates for new state policies to promote healthy families, healthy businesses, and healthy communities in the 21st century economy.