



PRESS RELEASE

For additional information

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VERDICT IS IN ON CALIFORNIA'S PAID FAMILY LEAVE LAW Legislation Planned for Washington State

California's Employment Development Department recently released its report on the first year of the paid family leave insurance program. Started in 2004, the program provides partial wage replacement for workers who need to take time off to care for a new baby or newly adopted child or for a seriously ill family member.

More than 137,000 individuals and their families benefited from California's first-in-the-nation family leave insurance program. The vast majority (88%) took time off to bond with a new child. Of those, 83% were mothers and 17% were fathers. Another 20,000 workers took time off to care for an ailing spouse, child, parent, or other family member; 70% were women, and 30% were men.

"This program is doing exactly what it was intended to do," said Representative Mary Lou Dickerson, a sponsor of family leave legislation in Washington. "It gives workers the time to take care of their families when situations are most critical. They go back to work knowing their family situation is under control." On average, workers took less than 5 weeks of paid family leave.

California's family leave program is the latest expansion of the state temporary disability insurance (TDI) program started in 1946. In the 1970s, California and the other four states with TDI systems added coverage of pregnancy and childbirth-related disabilities. The five state TDI programs include over 20% of the US workforce.

California's program is funded by workers through payroll deductions. Like Social Security and other insurance programs, paid family leave provides a modest benefit to prevent a family from having a financial crisis when a new baby joins the family or when a family member is seriously in need of care. Since the family leave program began, California has collected more than \$656 million in premiums and disbursed approximately \$300 million.

"The California system is robust and paying for itself as predicted," said Senator Karen Keiser, lead sponsor of a family leave insurance bill that passed in the Senate but did not make it to the House for a vote earlier this year.

"This new information shows how well family leave insurance works," said Marilyn Watkins, Chair of the Washington Family Leave Coalition. "Families with modest means are no longer being forced to make the agonizing choice between caring for a loved one and family economic security. It is gratifying to see new fathers using the leave as well as men with eldercare responsibilities."

Representative Dickerson and Senator Keiser plan to re-introduce family leave insurance legislation during the 2006 legislative session.

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