

## Supplemental Budget Bill Paves the Way for Family Leave Insurance

We've got something to cheer about!

In the face of an uncertain economic forecast and strenuous lobbying by corporate lobbyists opposed to paid family leave, first Governor Gregoire, and now House legislators, have demonstrated their commitment to strengthen families, promote early learning, and help businesses compete by funding Family Leave Insurance.



The proposed 2008 Supplemental Budget released today by the House of Representatives includes \$6.2 million in funding for the program, paving the way for benefits to begin in October 2009. (Governor Gregoire's proposed budget included similar funding.)

A proviso in the bill (PSHB 2687) also directs the Employment Security Department (which will administer the program) to implement efficiencies based on recommendations made by the Joint Legislative Task Force on Family Leave. That action will save taxpayers millions of dollars yearly, and make Family Leave Insurance simpler and easier to use for parents and employers.

That's good news - but this approach also has other merits:

- It avoids needless debate about the merits of family leave insurance, which is now law in Washington. (For more, read this [recent story](#) by the Associated Press.)
- It gives time to craft a thoughtful, pragmatic and creative long-term funding plan for paid family leave - rather than being pushed into a hasty decision by those who would prefer Washington continue on a "business-as-usual" path.
- It keeps the benefits of Family Leave insurance in sight: healthier children and lower infant mortality, better economic security for working families, and more profitable businesses.

Stay tuned! Legislators must approve the budget by March 13. We'll have more updates as the budget debate unfolds over the next few weeks.

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## Washington Family Leave Insurance - A Summary

**Timing:** Washington is the second state after California to adopt paid family leave. Washington's family leave insurance program was signed into law in May, 2007. Benefit payments begin October 1, 2009.

**Who's Eligible:** All parents of newborn or newly adopted children who have worked at least 680 hours in the previous year (same requirement as Unemployment Insurance).

**Benefits:** \$250 per week for up to 5 weeks (after a 1 week waiting period), prorated for people working less than 35 hours per week.

**Job Protection:** For workers in companies with more than 25 employees, who have been with that employer at least a year and worked at least 1,250 hours in the previous year. No worker may be discharged or discriminated against for taking paid family leave.

**Elective Coverage:** Self-employed people and those otherwise not covered may elect coverage, initially for a minimum of 3 years.

**Employer Protections:** At least 10 provisions of the new law protect employers, and employers are free to provide

more generous leave benefits if they desire.

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## **About the Washington Family Leave Coalition**

The Washington Family Leave Coalition includes organizations representing seniors, women, labor, health professionals, children's advocates, faith communities, low income workers, employers, and others. We advocate for new state policies to promote healthy families, healthy businesses, and healthy communities in the 21st century economy. | [Learn More](#)

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