



April 2010

Update: Work/Family Issues in Congress

Federal Funding for State Paid Family Leave Programs

President Obama has included \$50 million in his budget for grants to states to help with start-up costs for paid family leave programs. Washington's Family Leave Coalition and advocates across the country are excited by this opportunity to help rebuild economic security and improve health for families.

Background: California and New Jersey have successfully launched family leave insurance programs (FLI) to provide income support to workers while caring for a new child or seriously ill family members. These two states were able to add family leave to existing Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) programs that already covered the worker's own health condition.

Washington was the first of the 45 states *without* a TDI program to enact the beginnings of a Family and Medical Leave Insurance program in 2007, but implementation has been postponed from 2009 until 2012 because of the state fiscal crisis. Oregon, New York, New Hampshire, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Maine are among the other states that will introduce FLI legislation in 2011.

With the recession lingering, all states need help with start-up costs.

Why \$50 million?: Average annual start-up costs per state are \$10 million per year over three years, according to estimates in Washington and Oregon. We believe that with the encouragement of federal assistance, 4 states in addition to Washington are likely to enact FLI programs during the first half of calendar year 2011, and so be in a position to apply for the FY 2011 grants.

In future years – with a proven track record – we hope Congress will continue to appropriate funds to encourage all states to implement these programs which are so important for the health and economic security of American families.

Paid Sick Days

In addition to Family and Medical Leave Insurance for those occasional times when workers need extended time off, everyone needs access to routine paid sick leave – when kids are sick, when flu strikes, for preventative health care. Yet more than 40% of workers don't get a single sick day.

Lack of paid sick leave not only undermines family economic security and threatens public health, it also raises health care costs for everyone.

Tacoma and **Seattle** hope to join the ranks of cities that have enacted minimum paid sick days ordinances (San Francisco, Milwaukee, and Washington, DC, to date). Active campaigns are underway in these cities and communities across the country, with broad support from labor, women's, senior, faith, and other organizations.

Passage of the Healthy Families Act would help local efforts – and working Americans everywhere.

Just like federal and state/municipal minimum wage laws help set a floor and raise the bar for basic wage standards, a federal floor for a minimum number of paid sick days would energize state and municipal efforts – in Washington and around the country.