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POLICY BRIEFING SERIES

WORK-FAMILY INFORMATION FOR STATE LEGISLATORS

SUPPORTED BY: THE ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION



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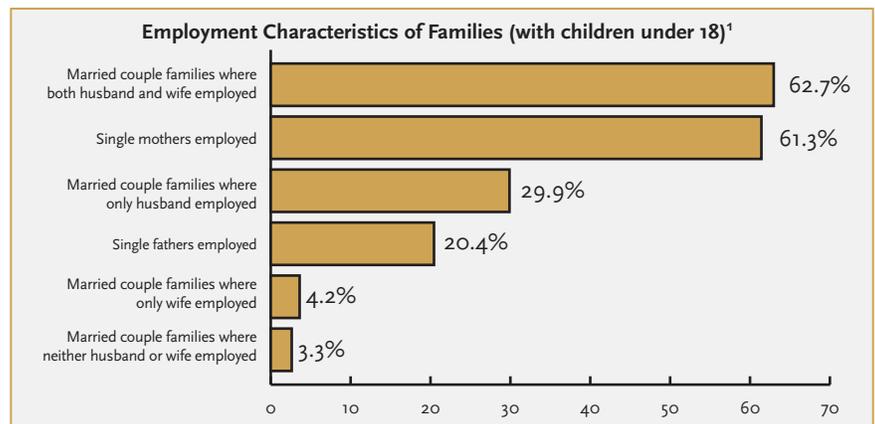
PROVIDING WORKING FAMILIES WITH AN IMPORTANT RESOURCE: TIME

Working families have indicated that they no longer have enough time to manage all of their responsibilities at work and at home. As a result, state legislators have taken steps to increase working families' time by passing legislation that promotes flexible schedules, part-time employment, phased retirement, leaves, and telework. Policymakers find that these policies can benefit working families and offer advantages to businesses and states.

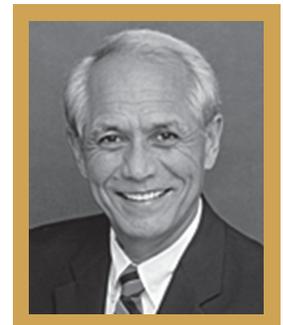
WHY TIME HAS BECOME A SCARCE RESOURCE FOR WORKING FAMILIES?

The perception that families 'have less time than they used to' is true. There are several factors contributing to working families' increased need for time-resources.

- Increased Labor Force Participation of Caregivers.** The vast majority of American children are now raised in families in which both parents, or the sole parent in single parent families, work for pay.¹ Additionally, 25% of workers have elder care responsibilities.²
- Longer Work Hours.** Over the past 25 years, the average combined weekly work hours of dual-earner couples with children has increased from 81 to 91 hours.³
- Longer Commutes.** Average commute times continue to rise⁴ and families who work need additional time to drop off and pick up children at school or at child care facilities.²
- Mismatched Schedules.** In today's 24/7 economy, work hours are frequently at odds with the daily schedules of other family members.²



"WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY, WHETHER ITS TELEWORK, COMPRESSED WORK WEEKS, OR FLEX-TIME, CAN HAVE A TREMENDOUS POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE MORALE OF AMERICA'S WORKFORCE. WE SHOULD BE ENCOURAGING BUSINESSES, CORPORATIONS, AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES TO OFFER WORKFORCE FLEXIBILITY PROGRAMS. THROUGH THESE EFFORTS, WE CAN IMPROVE EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY AND HEALTH, AND STRENGTHEN FAMILIES."



HAWAII SENATOR MIKE GABBARD

THE BENEFITS OF PROVIDING TIME-RESOURCES TO WORKING FAMILIES.

When working families have access to time-resources to manage their work and family responsibilities, substantial benefits for both families and employers can result. Yet, a majority of both working mothers and fathers report that they do not have enough time to spend with their children.⁶

FOR FAMILIES:

- Better Health.** When parents have the flexibility to care for an ill child, the child recovers faster.⁷ Additionally, parents with more access to flexible work schedules report fewer physical and mental health problems.^{2,3}
- Increased Life Satisfaction.** Many employees with access to flexible scheduling report high life satisfaction and low levels of negative spillover from work to home.³

FOR BUSINESS:

- Decreased Absenteeism.** The more flexible the workplace, the less frequently workers will miss work.⁸ The average cost of absenteeism is \$660 per person per year, and this is only a measure of direct payroll costs.⁹
- Improved Employee Retention.** Employees with more access to flexible work arrangements are more committed to their current employers.¹⁰ Over 80% of employees using flexible work arrangements report that such arrangements have a 'very positive' impact on their decision to stay with their employers.¹⁰

THE BENEFITS OF PROVIDING TIME-RESOURCES TO WORKING FAMILIES. (CONTINUED)

FOR BUSINESS (CONTINUED):

- *Increased Productivity.* Employees with more access to flexible work arrangements are more willing to work harder than required to help their companies succeed.³
- *Increased Shareholder Return.* Offering employees time-resources may yield higher profits, due to increased productivity, fewer turnover costs, and reduced health care costs.²

THE CONCERNS ABOUT PROVIDING TIME-RESOURCES TO WORKING FAMILIES.

While some employers have voluntarily implemented time-resource policies, other employers, including small business owners, are concerned about legislative mandates to provide such policies. Issues include:

- *Increased Labor and Management Costs.* Businesses are concerned about adopting family and medical leave due to the increased costs to pay temporary workers, cover overtime wages for non-temporary workers, provide health benefits for employees on leave, and replace workers who never return to the job.^{11, 12}
- *Work Quality and Productivity.* Managers report apprehension about the impact of flexibility on work quality and productivity.¹³ Small businesses are concerned about mandates to adopt family and medical leave due to a possible decline in worker productivity from increased absences, especially when a key employee is out.¹²
- *Insufficient Workplace Coverage and Scheduling Glitches During Peak Work Hours.* Managers foresee difficulties in ensuring office coverage, scheduling meetings, and covering peak work periods when all employees are needed to work at the same time.¹⁴
- *Abuse of Policies by Employees.* Employers report substantial numbers of fraudulent absences for minor or chronic conditions under the federal family and medical leave act resulting in increased costs to their businesses.¹⁵ Managers also report difficulty in confirming that employees are working when employees, using flexible schedules, are not visible to them.¹⁴
- *Administrative Burdens and Legal Hurdles.* New policies may require businesses to hire a consultant to rewrite benefit packages and manage potential privacy issues, in part to avoid future lawsuits by employees.¹² Further, tracking leave can be an administrative burden for employers.^{12, 15}

WHY 'TIME' IS A PUBLIC POLICY MATTER.

Problems with time-resources are of obvious concern to working families and businesses. But in what ways is this a policy issue?

- *Increasing Tax Revenues.* Labor force participation contributes to the common good. Families that are able to engage more fully in the workforce can contribute to states' economic development efforts.
- *Supporting Public Sector Employees.* Nationally, 14% of workers are employed in the public sector.⁵ Policymakers, as employers, can provide time-resource benefits to their employees.
- *Supporting the Next Generation of Workers.* When working parents can meet the caretaking needs of their children, children are healthier and have more favorable academic outcomes.²
- *Rewarding Employers.* Public policies can encourage employers to offer flexible work options to their employees by recognizing employers who provide benefits and by providing incentives to encourage others to do so.
- *Supporting Low-Wage Workers.* Most time-resources available to working families are provided by employers on a voluntary basis. Despite their need for greater flexibility, low-wage workers are the least likely to have access to time-resources.²

LEGISLATION CONSIDERED IN 2007.

During the most recent legislative session, 33 states proposed legislation to address some of the time problems encountered by working families.

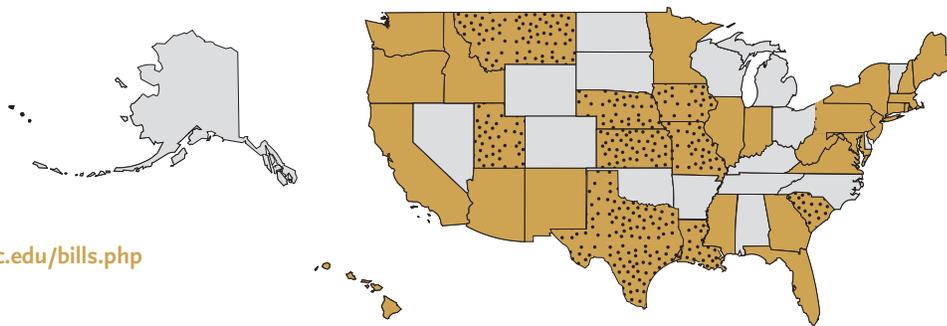
- *Flexible Schedules* (AL, CA, GA, HI, MD, NJ, NY, VA, WA, WY).
A Hawaii bill (SB 698) would establish a one year pilot workplace flexibility program for state employees.
- *Part-time Employment* (CA, HI, NH, LA, NM, UT, WA).
A New Hampshire bill (HB 720) seeks to establish a council to assess ways to tailor the unemployment insurance program to meet the needs of New Hampshire's working families, given that more individuals are working part-time.
- *Phased Retirement* (AK, FL, HI, ID, ME, NC, NJ).
A Florida bill (HB 861) would allow workers re-employed by any private or public employer after retirement to receive retirement benefits and compensation from the employer without any limitations.
- *Family Leave* (AZ, AR, CA, CT, HI, IL, IN, IA, ME, MA, NJ, NM, NY, NC, OR, RI, SC, WV, WI).
A West Virginia bill (HB 2299) would allow state employees to take paid leave to attend parent-teacher conferences for their children.
- *Remote Work* (HI, MD, MO, MT, NJ, NY, VA, WA).
A Washington bill (SB 5162) would create a Telework Enhancement Board to promote and accelerate remote work options.

THE STATE RESPONSE: TIME-RESOURCE LEGISLATION.

In recognizing the benefits of providing time-resources to working families, state legislatures introduced over 250 related bills during the past three sessions:

Number of Time-Resource Bills Introduced By State From 2005-2007:

-  High (4+ Bills)
-  Medium (2-3 Bills)
-  Low (0-1 Bills)



For more Bills and Statutes, visit: wfnetwork.bc.edu/bills.php

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) at <http://www.clasp.org/>

- “CLASP conducts cutting-edge research, provides insightful policy analysis, advocates at the federal and state levels, and offers information and technical assistance on a range of family policy and equal justice issues for their audience of federal, state, and local policymakers, advocates, researchers, and the media.”

The Labor Project for Working Families at <http://www.working-families.org/>

- “The Labor Project for Working Families partners with unions, union members, community based organizations and other activists to promote better work and family policies and programs. The Labor Project for Working Families has resources for union members, negotiating teams, organizers, policy makers as well as community based organizations and activists advocating for family friendly workplaces.”

The National Federation of Independent Business Research Foundation at <http://www.nfib.com/page/researchFoundation>.

- “NFIB Research Foundation is one of the leading sources of information about small business in the United States. A 501(c)(3) organization, the foundation conducts research about policy-related issues as well as the business practices and economic impact of small firms through its Small Business Economic Trends reports and other economic research studies. The empirically based information about small business, the product of more than 30 years of research, is available to policymakers, small-business owners, scholars and the public.”

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The Sloan Work and Family Research Network can provide you with additional research-based information about working families.

VISIT WWW.BC.EDU/WFNETWORK, EMAIL WFNETWORK@BC.EDU, OR CALL 617.552.1708.