

## Investing in Infrastructure and Programs that Support Working Families

President-elect Obama has called for an economic recovery plan that is “equal to the task” of helping the U.S. economy out of the recession. It is clear from the plan being developed by the President-elect and Congress that the U.S. is about to embark on a historically large job creation and infrastructure enhancement program. Any such program must recognize that the labor force has changed dramatically in the past 50 years. Now, the majority of adult household members need to be in the workforce in order to meet basic financial needs. As a result, most families no longer have someone at home to care for children, the ill, or the elderly. Yet, workplace standards still reflect the 20th century assumption of a father with a full-time job and a stay-at-home wife who manages care-giving responsibilities. Without updated standards and supports, workers cannot adequately fulfill both their care-giving and job responsibilities.

President-elect Obama and most economists favor infrastructure investments that not only address the immediate needs of the economy to preserve and create jobs, but that will make the US more productive over the long term. Investing in an infrastructure that supports working families, like investing in high speed broadband, light rail transit systems, and energy efficient buildings, will promote economic recovery and will equip the U.S. for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As Congress considers the recovery package, they should pay attention to the quality of jobs being created and how to direct funds to investments that support working families. The public has demanded – and policy makers now acknowledge – that bailouts to banks and other businesses must come with requirements on how that money is spent. Just as **banks that get taxpayers’ money should be required to spend it**, and **auto companies that are bailed out should be required to make fuel efficient cars**, the economic recovery program should be tied to **jobs that work for people and families**.

Four criteria for the recovery package are:

### 1. Jobs created by the economic recovery plan should be good quality jobs.

- A quality job provides:
  - livable wages and benefits so workers can support their families;
  - paid time off so workers can care for themselves and family members
    - Paid sick days for preventative care or to stay home when workers or their family members have a short-term illness;
    - Family and medical leave insurance that provides wage replacement while a worker is recovering from a serious illness, caring for a seriously ill family member, or bonding with a new child, and
  - some control to workers over their schedules, including predictability and advance notice of schedules.
- Any businesses creating jobs as part of the economic recovery plan should be required to provide transparency and accountability to ensure that the jobs they create are good quality jobs.

- As a part of job creation, companies receiving contracts should be required to include jobs for historically underrepresented populations, with training as appropriate, to ensure that all people are given opportunity to benefit from the new jobs.

2. The recovery package should include a Federal fund of \$1.5 billion for states – no matching required – to use as **start-up funding to enact state paid family leave insurance programs**. Such funding will have a stimulating effect by providing wage replacement when workers are absent from work. Without such programs, workers’ spending is likely to be even further curtailed if they lose pay when they miss work.

3. **Federal business tax credits** extended through the economic recovery package **should be paired with implementation of family economic security measures, including the Healthy Families Act and expansion of the Family and Medical Leave Act**, and should require that those businesses **establish a process for their workers to request and obtain a flexible schedule**.

4. Ensure that bricks and mortar infrastructure is not limited to bridges and highways, but **includes schools and child care centers** – themselves offering **quality jobs** – in order to provide sufficient quality and affordable child care for today’s workers.

In addition to these main points, the unemployment insurance system needs to be modernized to make it accessible and supportive of today’s working families, including expanding eligibility to those who have lost their job to care for a family member.

A productive, healthy economy needs productive, healthy workers and families. Investing in a working family infrastructure will help the US achieve this goal. These proposals are good for workers and families, but also for the entire economy. It’s a win-win situation that helps us create the kind of society we want to have.

*Initiators*

Multi-State Working Family Consortium  
National Partnership for Women and Families

*Co-Signers*

9to5, National Association of Working Women  
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9to5 Colorado  
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A Better Balance: The Work and Family Legal Center  
AFL-CIO  
American Association of University Women (AAUW)  
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Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW)  
Colorado ACORN  
Colorado AFL-CIO  
Colorado Progressive Action  
Colorado Progressive Coalition  
Crittenton Women's Union  
DC Employment Justice Center  
Eastern Massachusetts Older Women's League (OWL)  
Economic Opportunity Institute  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Family Voices-New Jersey  
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Jewish Alliance for Law & Social Action (JALSA)  
Labor Project for Working Families  
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)  
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights  
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Maine Women's Lobby  
MomsRising  
Ms. Foundation for Women  
NAACP - Colorado Springs Branch  
National Center on Caregiving, Family Caregiver Alliance  
National Council of Jewish Women Seattle Section  
National Council of Women's Organizations  
National Employment Law Project  
National Organization for Women  
National Women's Conference Committee  
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby  
Northwest Women's Law Center  
New York State Paid Family Leave Coalition  
Our Bodies Ourselves  
Paid Family Leave Collaborative  
Pathways PA  
Restaurant Opportunities Centers United  
Southwest Women's Law Center  
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network of New Jersey (SPAN)  
Take Care Net  
United Architects, Inc.  
Washington CAN!  
Washington State Family Leave Coalition  
Wider Opportunities for Women  
Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment  
Women's Law Center of Maryland  
Women's Research & Education Institute

(list in formation)