More Than a Moment: FMLA25 Activities to Advance Gender Equity and Win Paid Leave for All

FEBRUARY 2018

As the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) turns 25, the country is in the midst of an extraordinary, long-overdue reckoning about gender equity and respect in the workplace. To secure a future in which all women and all people can live and work with dignity, we need policies that value women and care – including, at last, paid family and medical leave.

This is more than a moment. It’s a movement for real change in how women and all working people are treated in the workplace.

Join National Work and Family Coalition partners across the country as we mark 25 years of the FMLA and tell the story of what paid leave would mean for our families, our communities, our economy and our country.

Use the resources below and in the FAMILY Act toolkit to make the case for a strong national paid family and medical leave law, like the Family And Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act (H.R.947/S.337), on and around Feb. 5 and throughout the anniversary year.

Talking Points

- **The FMLA was an important first step toward transforming our workplaces and our culture.** But too often, working people – especially those who struggle the most to make ends meet – still must choose between their health or the health of a family member and a paycheck.

- **The FMLA inspired state and local lawmakers and private sector employers to do better.** Five states and the District of Columbia have passed paid leave programs. States, cities and counties across the country have adopted paid leave policies for public employees. And a growing number of private sector employers have adopted
plans for their own workforce and support a national paid leave program like the FAMILY Act.

- **Twenty-five years after the passage of the FMLA, the research about paid and unpaid leave is clear.** Unpaid leave is not enough. A strong body of evidence shows that paid family and medical leave strengthens families and supports public health and child development. Research also shows that paid leave helps employers recruit and retain valued employees, benefitting businesses and our economy. Data from states with paid leave show health and economic benefits and strong levels of support from employers.

- **Inclusive, comprehensive paid family and medical leave** supports workplace equity and economic security for women, LGBTQ workers, people with disabilities, low-income workers – who are disproportionately people of color – and all working people.

- **It is past time to fulfill the promise of the FMLA** by securing a strong, real national paid family and medical leave policy.

- Modeled on successful state programs, the **FAMILY Act would create a sustainable, affordable, inclusive national paid family and medical leave program** that provides security when people need time to care for a new child, a seriously ill or injured loved one, their own serious health issue or to address military family care needs.

**Blog Post Prompts**

*Write a post that highlights your organization’s or members’ unique perspectives on the FMLA and the urgent need for a national paid family and medical leave law* for your organizational site or for [SupportPaidLeave.org](http://SupportPaidLeave.org). (Click [here](http://here) or contact Jessica Mason at jmason@nationalpartnership.org for more information about using SupportPaidLeave.org.)

**Tips for a great post:**

- Share a personal story or original research or content developed by your organization.
- Include graphics, photos and other images.
- Explain why strong, real paid leave that checks all the boxes is especially important to your community.
- Connect your post to the FMLA25 anniversary and the movement for equitable, family friendly workplaces using the talking points above.
- Share your post with the coalition so we can help lift it up!

**Letter to the Editor**

*Please consider working with your organization’s members and supporters to submit letters to the editor (LTEs) – or submit your own – to raise awareness of FMLA25 and the need for a national paid family and medical leave program, like the FAMILY Act.*
Before submitting an LTE, know your specific outlet’s submission guidelines, especially maximum length (usually no more than 250 – 300 words) and the contact information you are required to provide. An LTE is not the best place for a nuanced policy argument or list of facts. Instead, keep it simple.

Dear Editor,

February 5 is the 25th anniversary of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the only national law that guarantees some working people time away from work when they have a new child, face a serious health condition or need to care for a seriously ill family member. The FMLA was a good first step, but many hardworking people in [City/State Name] cannot take unpaid leave under the FMLA because they are not eligible or they can’t afford to miss a paycheck. When working people have to choose between being there for their loved ones and a job, that hurts our families, our community and our economy.

Fortunately, there is federal legislation, modeled after successful state programs, that would help. The Family And Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act (H.R.947/S.337) would establish a national paid leave insurance program to guarantee workers some pay when they need time to recover from their own serious illness, care for a new child or a sick family member, or to address military family care needs.

Evidence from state programs shows that paid leave has a positive effect on families’ financial stability, children’s health, and businesses’ bottom lines, while reducing use of public assistance programs. And 82 percent of 2016 voters – across party lines – say it is important for the president and Congress to consider a paid family and medical leave law.

[State’s] congressional delegation [or specific member of Congress] should stand up for [City/State Name] working families, businesses and the local economy by supporting the FAMILY Act.

Sincerely,

[Name; Address; City, State; Phone Number; Email Address]
Word count: Approx. 250

E-mail Action Alert

**Action Alert: Tell Your Member of Congress It’s Past Time for National Paid Leave**

Dear Supporter,

Like you, we’ve been wrestling with this national reckoning about gender equality and respect in the workplace.
We know this conversation is just the beginning, and we’ve been thinking hard about what it will take to secure a future in which all women and all people can live and work with dignity.

While we don’t have all the answers, we do know this: it’s past time for policies that support and value women and caregivers in the workplace.

That’s why we are asking for your help this Monday, February 5 – the 25th anniversary of the Family and Medical Leave Act, the nation’s unpaid leave law. Working people have used the FMLA more than 200 million times.

The FMLA was an important first step, but after 25 years, the majority of working people in the United States still lack access to paid leave, meaning they are forced to choose between a paycheck and taking time to care for themselves or a loved one. Not having paid leave means women and caregivers leave the workforce, families struggle to make ends meet, businesses lose valued employees and our economy suffers.

But this problem is one we can fix: Tell your members of Congress it’s past time to pass a real, inclusive paid family and medical leave program like the FAMILY Act (H.R.947/S.337).

What you can do:

- Contact your Members of Congress and ask them to co-sponsor the FAMILY Act (H.R.947/S.337), which would create a strong, inclusive national paid family and medical leave program.
- Visit www.WeTweet.org: Enter your zip code to find your Members of Congress and automatically send a tweet in support of the FAMILY Act.
- Call the Capitol Switchboard to be connected to your representatives: (202) 224-3121
- Write a letter or send an email: You can find your legislators’ contact information at www.senate.gov and www.house.gov.

What you should tell your members of Congress:

- The FAMILY Act would create a national paid family and medical leave program that guarantees working people up to 12 weeks of paid leave to bond with a new child, care for their own or a family member’s serious health condition, or address military family needs related to active duty deployment.
- The FAMILY Act is modeled on successful state programs.
- Other solutions under consideration would cause more harm than good for women, lower-wage workers and small businesses.

Thanks for all you do,

[Name]
#PaidLeaveMeans Video Stories With Countable

Record and share video testimonials – powered by Countable.us – about what paid leave means to you, your organization’s members and the diverse communities represented by our coalition. Note: Countable requires an email address. The National Partnership will NOT use this information for its own purposes.

Direct your supporters to SupportPaidLeave.org/videos to record and share #paidleavemeans videos.

Helpful tip #1: Hold your mobile device sideways when recording videos.

Helpful tip #2: State your name and location at the beginning of your video so it sounds more authentic, such as:

“My name is [First Name] and I’m from [City, State]. To me, paid leave means ... “

Prompts to help inspire your video message:

- Who would you be able to take care of if you had paid family or medical leave?
- What would having paid family or medical leave make possible for you or your family in the future?
- Have you thought about what it would take for you to be able to deal with a serious personal or family medical issue or emergency?

Sample “paid leave means” messages:

- Paid leave means ... I was able to take time away from work for surgery and recover without worrying about the bills.
- Paid leave means ... I could be with my mom during her chemo treatments without worrying about losing my job.
- Paid leave means ... my growing family was financially secure when I cared for my partner after her C-section and bonded with our newborn.
- Paid leave means ... the freedom to start a family if, when, and how I choose to.
- Paid leave means ... I could pay my rent when I was in the hospital.
- Paid leave means ... a more equal and inclusive workplace for everyone.
- Paid leave means ... others won't have to use retirement savings, like I did, when their children are hospitalized.

Sample Facebook post for Countable:

- The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) was signed 25 years ago on Feb. 5. Help honor its promise of a family friendly America by voicing your support for paid leave. Share your story of what #paidleavemeans to you this #FMLA25. http://SupportPaidLeave.org/videos
Try to collect a range of stories that illustrate the many reasons people need paid family and medical leave, including to get care or treatment for their own serious illnesses and injuries, to welcome a new child and/or to care for a seriously ill or injured close family member (partner, parent, child), or military family needs related to deployment.

Digital Day of Action and Social Media Toolkit

Please join us for a digital day of action on Monday, February 5, including a coalition tweet storm from 1 – 2 p.m. ET using #FMLA25 and #PaidLeaveMeans! For an #FMLA25 and #PaidLeaveMeans toolkit with sample tweets and shareable images, click here.

If your organization is interested in co-sponsoring the tweet storm, complete this form. Co-sponsors may submit sample content using #FMLA25 and #PaidLeaveMeans by emailing Becky Guldin.

Shareable image

Download this image here.

Sample Facebook post to share the infographic:

- The cost of Congress’ inaction on paid leave hurts workers, families, businesses and the economy. The FAMILY Act would help fulfill the FMLA’s promise of more equitable, family friendly workplaces for all. #FMLA25 #PaidLeaveMeans