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"The Voice of Working Women"



## Exploring Workplace Flexibility



### Meeting the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce

As part of the Women's Bureau's "Strengthening the Family" initiative, Director Shinae Chun is exploring workplace flexibility, such as comp time. Workplace

flexibility is an important issue for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workforce, especially for working women.

Story Continued

According to Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao, "The Department of Labor is having to change what it does - to keep fulfilling its mission of serving workers. Many people today value flexibility and freedom as much as they do their weekly paycheck. That means we need to give employers and employees the option to substitute paid time off in lieu of mandatory overtime. If a worker wants to convert time-and-a-half into comp time - to go to their child's soccer game - he or she should have that choice. In fact, people who work for the federal government already have that ability; so should the rest of America."

Modernization of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 would give private sector workers the same flexibility currently enjoyed by their federal counterparts and would reflect demographics, attitudes and behaviors regarding work and family life not present when the act was enacted. One of the key changes is the number of women in the labor force today compared to a generation ago, as demonstrated by figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau:

- In 1940 there were 12.9 million women and girls in the labor force compared to 66.1 million in 2001.
- In 1940, 24.5 percent of the labor force was made up of women and girls compared to 46.6 percent in 2001.

#### Article 1

- [Reinvesting in our Nation's Nurses](#)

#### Article 2

- [Accessing Health Care](#)

#### Article 3

- [Saving for a Lifetime](#)

#### Article 4

- [Exploring Workplace Flexibility](#)

#### Article 5

- [Honoring Women Achievers](#)

#### [Previous Editions](#)



When Director Chun meets with women business owners, she advises, *"Flexible scheduling should be used as an instrument for balancing work and family needs and for recruiting and retaining employees by businesses facing a labor shortage. Flexible options would also boost job satisfaction and labor productivity of current employees."*

Workplace flexibility is receiving special focus from the Women's Bureau as part of its "Strengthening the Family" agenda.

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For More Information About WB, Contact:  
U.S. Department of Labor  
Women's Bureau  
200 Constitution Avenue, NW - Room S-3002  
Washington, DC 20210  
Telephone 1-800-827-5335 or (202) 693-6710  
Fax (202) 693-6725

 [Back to Top](#)

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**U.S. Department of Labor**  
Frances Perkins Building  
200 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20210

**1-800-827-5335**  
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