

**Honorable Patricia S. Schroeder**  
President & Chief Executive Officer  
Association of American Publishers  
Statement before the  
House Committee Education & Labor  
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections  
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American families will tell you employment policies have not kept pace with the changing needs of the workforce in this country.

I was proud to be the “mother” of the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). It took nine months to deliver each of my children and nine years to deliver FMLA! I had worked on the bill for several years and was amazed by what a hard sell it was. Pediatricians everywhere felt it was so important for mothers and fathers to have time to bond with new borns. Bonding wasn’t just something NICE to do; there were volumes of research proving it essential to healthy development. Meanwhile, the business community continued to be able to say to workers, “Choose, it’s your family or your job;” or “It’s your baby or your job.” This seemed very barbaric.

In 1988, after coming to my senses and getting out of the Presidential race, I looked for another way to have some impact in the campaign for work and family issues. My friends, who had helped me with FMLA, Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, America’s favorite pediatrician; Gary David Goldberg, creator of the television show Family Ties; and Diana Meehan, a distinguished writer and thinker, said they would join me in a “Great American Family Tour.” The tour would go to early primary states, hold meetings and ask people to get the candidates to commit to support the FMLA and other badly needed family legislation. We got larger crowds than the candidates wherever we went.

We were so excited when candidate George H.W. Bush said he supported FMLA during the campaign and were shocked when he vetoed it after its passage saying, he was for it in concept but not in the law! So much for campaign promises. FMLA was the first major bill signed by President Clinton in 1993. He had been the Governor of Arkansas during our tour, joined us, and was fully ready to go! Every developed country had a stronger bill than we passed, but at least the United States was no longer a zero.

When we passed it, there was huge opposition.... many said they didn't want the Federal Government mandating benefits, employees should have the "freedom" to negotiate their own benefits! Others did not want men included; they wanted maternity leave. However, there were legal cases saying such benefits should be extended to both men and women.

Here is what the amended bill said:

Any company with less than 50 employees is not covered. An employee must work a year before being eligible. Family leave was reduced from 18 weeks to 12 weeks. Medical leave was reduced from 26 weeks to 12 weeks.

Still the business community howled. There was a Commission that studied the impact of FMLA on American businesses for two years after its enactment. The impact was very slight. Unlike a heart attack or major illness, employers could plan for when an employee with a new baby would be on leave. There are many companies that provide qualified employees on a short-term basis to fill in. Obviously, families that used it loved it. However, many families could not use it because they either worked in smaller companies that weren't covered or they could not afford to miss the paychecks.

Here we are in 2008, fifteen years later, and we haven't made much progress. I do want to compliment you for including in the Defense Authorization bill an extension of leave to six months for families of workers who have a seriously injured service member and 12 weeks leave if it is needed because of the deployment or impending deployment of a family member. Thanks so much for that much needed coverage, but we still need to consider paid leave and of course now the Department of Labor has proposed new regulations, making it more difficult for workers to access FMLA leave.

It seems to me we should be continuing to catch up with the rest of the world. Juggling work and family is going to be essential for almost every American family in the global economy we live in. The Norman Rockwell image of full-time caregiver at home is history. FMLA should be expanded to provide coverage to all Americans and Congress should try and figure out how to move to paid leave.

Thank you.