

EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

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Chairwoman Woolsey Statement at Subcommittee Hearing On “The Family and Medical Leave Act: Extending Coverage to Military Families Left at Home”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. Lynn Woolsey(D-CA), chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Workforce Protections, for a subcommittee hearing on “The Family and Medical Leave Act: Extending Coverage to Military Families Left at Home”*

Thank you everyone, for coming here today to participate in this hearing.

My opening remarks will be brief because we want to hear from these distinguished witnesses.

The Family and Medical Leave Act is intended to help individuals balance their family and work obligations.

Ninety million working people are now eligible for unpaid job protected leave for up to 12 weeks a year.

When the Act was passed in 1993, it was a giant step, and is of great importance to working families.

A majority of military spouses work outside of the home and must balance work and family, to put food on the table, and provide the support their families need.

But they face additional challenges because their lives have been disrupted by multiple deployments, involving not only active service members but those in the National Guard and reserves.

And the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have resulted in almost 30,000 casualties with many service members being seriously injured.

These wounded warriors need substantial support and care from their families, often for long periods of time, and some permanently.

So no matter where we come down on the merits of these conflicts, we must help the families involved---families who include not only spouses but parents, children and others---support their loved ones who are putting their lives on the line for us in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, this Administration has let down our returning service members and we need to reaffirm our commitment to these brave men and women.

Therefore, I am honored to have introduced H.R. 3481, the House companion to Senators Dodd and Clinton's legislation, S.1975, which amends the FMLA to provide 6 months of leave for spouses, children, parents and other "next of kin" to care for injured service members.

This legislation incorporates one of the recommendations of the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors, chaired by Secretary Shalala and Senator Dole.

It is the least we can do and hopefully we can do more.

I look forward to the testimony today on this very critical issue.

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