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**Comp Time - Radio Address 3/22/97**

**DRAFT**

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON  
RADIO ADDRESS TO THE NATION  
MARCH 22, 1997**

Good morning. I am glad to be back at the microphone this morning. My knee is healing just fine and I am happy to report that I have just completed a successful summit meeting with President Yeltsin in Helsinki.

Today, I want to talk with you about how we can work together to strengthen America's working families by helping them strike a real balance between work and family. We have made significant progress in this area with the passage of the landmark Family and Medical Leave Act in 1993. I am proud of the impact this bill has had on the every day lives of working families. Since its enactment, millions of Americans have been able to take unpaid leave to care for a new born child or be with a family member who is sick. Everywhere I go, people tell me "I don't know what I would have done without the Family Leave Law -- it enabled me to take care of my child without hurting my family, without losing my job."

With new pressures on families in the way they work and live, I believe we have to do even more to give people the chance to be good workers and good parents. That is why I have proposed expanding the Family and Medical Leave Act so that workers can take time off to attend teacher conferences or to take a child for a medical check-up. I have challenged the Congress to pass legislation that will do that this year and I have high hopes that they will.

But this morning, I want to talk about another way to strengthen working families. Last June, at the Vice President's annual Family Reunion Conference in Nashville, I proposed that we give our nation's workers and their employers responsible compensatory time legislation that gives working people the flexibility they need to meet their obligations at home and in the workplace. I laid out a plan that offers employees this simple choice: If you work overtime you can be paid time and a half, just as the law now requires, or, if you want, you can take that payment in time -- an hour and a half off for every hour you work overtime. Simply put, you can choose money in the bank or time on the clock -- time that can be used for a vacation, an extended maternity leave or to be there at critical moments for your children. But I have said from the start that this must be done the right way. Otherwise, it could reduce flexibility for families and make their lives more difficult. Any legislation must uphold three fundamental principals: real choice for employees, real protection against employer abuse, and preservation of fair labor standards such as the 40 hour work week and the right to overtime pay.

A Republican bill that was passed in the House this week and a Senate version that will soon be voted on, both fail that test. Let me tell you why. First, under the Republican plan, employees aren't really given a choice of whether to be paid for overtime in money, or in time off from work. There are no effective safeguards to stop an unscrupulous employer from telling his employees who need the paycheck more than family time that they have no choice. Second, under their proposals, employees don't have real choice over when to take the comp time they have earned. Employers could deny requests for comp time by claiming business would be

“unduly disrupted,” or they could simply “cash out” earned comp time with just 30 days notice. Third, employees who take comp time could be forced to work extra hours at night or over the weekend to make up the time, without any overtime pay. And even worse, the proposal in the Senate could eliminate the 60 year tradition of the 40 hour work week.

Let me be clear: the vast majority of employers will be fair to their workers, under any system. But we must always make sure to protect those employees who need our help.

**Giving workers the real choice of taking time off as overtime pay is good for families. It will help all Americans balance the demands of home and work. But if employers are the only ones with choices that’s bad for families. And it’s no choice at all.**

**Employees and their families -- not employers -- are the ones who should choose if, when, and how they use comp time. The moment a responsible comp time bill hits my desk, I will sign it. But, I will veto any legislation that fails to guarantee real choice for employees, real protection against employer abuse and real preservation of fair labor standards. It is time for us to join together to give America’s working families the help they need to succeed, both on the job and in the home. Let’s pass comp time legislation, but let’s do it right.**

Thanks for listening.