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FEW Washington Legislative Update July 16-31, 2024

IN CONGRESS:

FEW Washington Legislative Update – July 16-31, 2024 Tier I

Federal Women:

Gender Pay Gap

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is encouraging federal agencies to conduct their own gender pay gap analysis to better understand and address disparities.

A [memo](#) from OPM acting director Robert Shriver said that the federal workforce has a gender pay gap of 5.6 percent, meaning that on average, women are paid around 94 cents for every dollar a man makes. This is compared to a 25 percent federal gender pay gap in 1992 and a current 16 percent national gender pay gap.

OPM has already [prohibited the use of previous salary information](#) in setting pay for federal employees as part of action to boost pay equity. This followed an executive order on diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) in the federal workforce and a subsequent government-wide strategic plan.

“We don’t want agencies to perpetuate gender pay discrimination that occurred outside of government when hiring people into government jobs,” said Shriver. “But our work is not finished, and we need to do more.”

OPM has recommended that agencies carry out their own pay gap data analysis similar to that conducted by [OPM on a government-wide basis](#). The goal is to identify areas where gender-related and racial/ethnic-related pay disparities exist and develop targeted strategies to address them.

Shriver said that when comparing the average salary of women and men in various racial-ethnic groups to the average salary of white males in the government, “we find larger pay gaps that also need to be addressed”.

The guidance notes that: “In some cases, agency data analysis may need to probe deeper than the analysis conducted by OPM to fully understand the factors behind a gender or racial/ethnic pay disparity. For example, an agency may generate data for major occupations that show gender pay gaps by age groupings within each occupation.”

(Source: [Global Government Forum](#))

Paid Family Leave

Caregivers power the U.S. economy, but insufficient investment in the care system forces families — especially women — to bear unsustainable costs. What you need to know: A recent [survey](#) commissioned by Pivotal Ventures and Bipartisan Policy Center Action, and conducted by Morning Consult, reveals the widespread demand for caregiving solutions.

Why it's important: Caregivers — whether they are parents, adult children caring for aging parents or partners supporting loved ones living with disabilities — play a vital role in our society. Yet, their invaluable contributions frequently go unrecognized.

[Research shows](#) the average caregiver spends 45 hours each week on unpaid care, often in addition to another full-time job.

Legislation: New Co-sponsors

Comprehensive Paid Leave for Federal Employees Act ([H.R. 856/S. 274](#))

54 co-sponsors in the House, 12 co-sponsors in the Senate

Converts unpaid caregiving & medical FMLA leave to paid leave for federal employees (parental is currently paid)

- Rep. Linda Sánchez (CA-38) @RepLindaSanchez – July 18

Caring for All Families Act ([H.R. 789/S. 242](#))

67 co-sponsors in the House, 9 co-sponsors in the Senate

Expands the FMLA’s family definition to include a broader set of relationships, including chosen family.

FEW Washington Legislative Update – July 16-31, 2024 Tier II

Federal Workforce:

Federal Pay Increase

Federal employees are one step closer to receiving the 2 percent pay raise the Biden administration proposed for fiscal 2025. The Senate Appropriations Committee remained silent about the proposed increase when it passed the Financial Services and General Government appropriations bill last Thursday. With the House also remaining silent when it passed its version of the spending bill earlier this summer, the pay raise is all but a done deal. Federal unions and other employee organizations have pushed for a larger pay raise for feds in 2025, calling for a 7.4 percent boost rather than the 2 percent proposal. Nothing is set in stone, however, until President Joe Biden signs an executive order to enact the pay increase, which usually happens in December.

([Full committee markup of 2025 spending bills](#) - Senate Appropriations Committee)

Telework Abuse Bills

Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., last week introduced a pair of bills that would issue draconian cuts to federal workers' pay and retirement benefits, which he said is needed to combat "telework abuse."

The Federal Employee Return to Work Act ([S. 4834](#)) would require agencies to pay federal employees as if they were part of the "Rest of U.S." locality pay rate, regardless of where they actually live and work, if they engage in telework at least one day per week. Excluded from the provision are disabled employees who require telework as part of a reasonable accommodation, members of the Foreign Service, military service members, federal law enforcement officers and federal workers whose jobs require them to travel frequently.

"Federal employees get paid extra to work in higher-cost cities," Cassidy said in a statement. "But what if they don't show up to work? Why should they get paid? If you don't show up for work, you don't get paid at the same rate just for teleworking."

Cassidy pointed to a 2023 Government Accountability Office report that found at the beginning of that year, 17 of 24 federal agency headquarters buildings experienced occupancy rates at or under 25 percent. But the [Congressional Budget Office](#) recently found that telework rates among private sector workers was actually higher than that of federal workers.

Cassidy's other bill, the Federal Employee Locality Accountability in Retirement Act ([S. 4833](#)), would remove locality pay from annuity calculations under the Federal Employees Retirement System for all new federal employees. Currently, when a federal worker retires, the defined benefit portion of their retirement package is calculated by taking the average of the highest three years of the employee's salary, including both basic and locality pay.

(Source: [Government Executive](#))

FEW in Action

FEW's Advocacy Day – September 17-19, 2024

Mark your calendars for *FEW's Advocacy Day on September 18, 2024!* This important event has been rescheduled due to a last-minute joint session of Congress, but your advocacy remains crucial.

If you aren't scheduled to be in Washington for FEW's Advocacy Day, you can still make your voice heard by writing to your Congressional Representatives through Voter Voice. Participate from anywhere and ensure your concerns are communicated to your representatives!

This is a valuable opportunity to engage in important discussions, advocate for vital issues, and connect with like-minded individuals dedicated to making a difference.

For all of those who are not in-person you can still have an impact by writing to your members of Congress for FEW's Advocacy Day.

Don't miss out on this impactful event!

FEW Washington Legislative Update – July 16-31, 2024 Tier III

Women as a Class:

Olympic Moms Are Changing the Game and So Can You: 5 Ways Employers Can Support the Olympic Feat of Balancing Work and Family

The Paris 2024 Summer Olympics are officially here, and this year is full of milestones – from the Olympic debut of “breaking” (you may call it breakdancing) to equal participation rates by male and female athletes for the first time ever. Amid all the excitement, organizers have also made important changes for parent athletes. These new initiatives are especially beneficial for (and thanks to) the moms who are competing in the world's largest sporting event while caring for their young children. In this Insight, we'll look at what's changing at the Games, the strength and

endurance required of *all* moms in the workforce, and five ways employers can support the parents in your workforce.

A Win for Paris 2024 Parent Athletes

Some are calling it the [friendliest Olympics ever](#) for competing moms. For the first time, the Olympic and Paralympic Village will include a nursery – a private space where parent athletes can spend quality time with their young children. According to the [official announcement](#), the area will be open from 9:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M. daily for visitors with a guest pass and feature private breastfeeding space, safe play areas, and diaper-changing facilities. Interested athletes can use an [online service](#) to book slots in the nursery space.

The athletes' village nursery was created by Pampers and Allyson Felix – the most decorated track and field athlete in history and a mother of two. The retired American sprinter now sits on the International Olympic Committee Athletes' Commission and has been vocal about normalizing childcare at sporting events. Regarding this initiative, [Felix said](#): “The systems aren't in place for mothers whatsoever. I'm just trying to use my voice and speak up for some of these pretty basic things and try to see what we can implement.”

While this is a big step in the right direction, the progress is long overdue and somewhat lacking. For example, babies aren't exactly known for being predictable, and their hunger demands don't end at bedtime. The new rules still don't allow children to stay overnight with their parents in the Olympic Village, and it appears that those who use the nursery can do so only during the preset allotted time window. The French Olympic Committee, though, has attempted to address these gaps by providing hotel rooms for breastfeeding French athletes. The accommodations will be near the athletes' village, and nursing moms may stay overnight there with their infants.

Being a Mom in the Workforce Can Feel Like an Olympic Sport

Just like these decorated athletes, mothers in the workforce must juggle paid work and family responsibilities. In addition, birthing parents must perform this balancing act on top of significant physical and emotional changes to their he-missing the rest of the sentence

Supporting Your Caregiving Employees Is Good for Business

Providing caregiving benefits to address these challenges promises a high return on investment. A [recent study by Vivvi and The Fifth Trimester](#) concluded that employer support for employees who have caregiving obligations “is not ‘bells and whistles’ but a vital pillar of profitability, with calculable ROI, that makes sense for all businesses and employees.”

5 Ways You Can Support Your Employees Who Have Young Children

While this list is not exhaustive, here are five main areas where you can strengthen your support for employees who have caregiving responsibilities. Note that this article focuses on working parents – and especially moms and birthing parents – of young children, but many of these tips could be extended to or adjusted for employees with other types of caregiving responsibilities, including eldercare.

1. Workplace Culture

Make sure that your company's culture creates a supportive atmosphere for employees with young children. You can accomplish this through your policies and benefits, as we'll discuss more below. But from a broader perspective, your leaders and managers should be well-trained on those initiatives, and they should encourage their caregiving employees to participate. You should also encourage your managers to participate in these initiatives when applicable to set the tone for the rest of your workforce. You can also foster a positive environment by hosting family-friendly work events or simply welcoming employees to talk about their family life.

2. Parental Leave Policies

While federal and most state laws do not require employers to offer paid parental leave — and FMLA only applies under certain conditions — employers should consider implementing a parental leave policy that goes beyond what's required by law. Doing so not only benefits your employees but also increases the chances that they will return to their jobs and stick around – enabling you to decrease employee turnover, retain valuable employees, and attract new talent. And gender-neutral policies provide greater benefits to all employees and promote gender equality within your company and beyond.

3. Breastfeeding Support

[Federal law requires](#) employers to provide time and space for employees to express breast milk at work, and [some state laws are even more expansive](#). Beyond the legal requirements, you can make your lactating employees feel supported in small but powerful ways.

4. Caregiving Benefits

Employers who offer caregiving benefits could see a high ROI and improvements in employee retention, recruitment, productivity, and workplace culture.

5. Outcome-Based Work

Finally, while it might not work for all industries or positions, many modern jobs can be evaluated based on results rather than hours worked (or when those hours are worked). By valuing quality over quantity, you can set clear goals and objectives for your employees while also giving them flexibility in how they accomplish them so they can successfully juggle their work and caregiving roles.

Conclusion

As you tune in for the Games this year, consider ways you can level the playing field for your employees who have young children.

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