



# TAKE BACK YOUR TIME

OCTOBER 24 WWW.TIMEDAY.ORG

## NEWSLETTER -- FEBRUARY, 2006

*"Hello. I am so proud of what you are doing for over worked people that I have chosen your organization as my subject for a school project. Your program has helped many people such as my mom. I'm very grateful that I am able to spend more time with her."*

-- email from a 12 year-old in Winnipeg, Canada

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## Exciting News About Meeting In Washington, D.C.!

We are very excited to share with you news about the meetings we hosted in Washington, D.C. in early January to explore best strategies for bringing time, work and family issues into political campaigns in 2006 and beyond. We were very inspired and re-energized by these meetings.

On Thursday, January 5th, we met with key staff people from the Edward Kennedy, Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, Pete Stark, and Rosa DeLauro Congressional offices, all of whom are actively working on work-life balance legislation. Their responses to our proposed project were very positive and encouraging. They told us that for every other piece of legislation they work on there is some kind of grassroots movement pushing it along, but for time, work and family issues there is none like ours.

On Friday, January 6th, we brought together nearly 30 participants for a day-long meeting at the AFL-CIO headquarters. Representatives from business, women's, family, labor, faith, health, simplicity, and sustainability organizations came together to consider specific work-life public policy ideas and to brainstorm counterarguments, messaging and overall strategies for how to most effectively achieve the goal of getting these ideas onto the political agenda in the 2006 elections and beyond.

What became evident from these discussions was that we should focus on a variety of outreach efforts rather than on our original idea of hosting one week-long candidate training in D.C.

We are developing our strategy for building what we are calling the TIME TO CARE outreach campaign and are considering the following activities:

- Build a "TIME TO CARE" Coalition
- Conduct a time themed Poll/Focus Group
- Develop messages and materials
- Outreach to political organizations and campaigns
- Host a single policy briefing in Washington, D.C.
- Solicit a key political leader to give a major policy address
- Host Town Hall Meetings in the regions of the key campaigns
- Begin student outreach campaign
- Focus the theme and events for Take Back Your Time Day, October 24, 2006, on the "TIME TO CARE" campaign efforts

We have already received word of potential interest in this campaign from several upcoming US Senate races and from some governors.

While the task we are taking on is a big one, it is enhanced by widespread new recognition, even among many businesses, that change is needed. More and more stories indicate that Gen X and Y workers are looking for greater work/life balance and that as boomers retire, employers may need to be much more flexible in what they offer coveted skilled workers (*What Do Gen Xers Want? Here's how some of FORTUNE's 100 Best Companies to Work For keep young up-and-comers happy.* By Anne Fisher, FORTUNE, 1/17/2006). These companies may be less likely to object to public policies which actually could help share their burden and not undercut their competitiveness.

Moreover, as companies grant more time to skilled workers, the gap between privileged and poorer workers -- already large -- will widen further, making it more necessary that we guarantee some basic floor level of paid family, sick, and vacation leave to less skilled workers. Thus, this issue will increasingly become a matter of simple social justice and can also be framed in those terms. As it is already, the poor are least likely to have protections for their right to time outside the workplace. Current trends are only likely to exacerbate that fact unless corrected by public policies.

But our message goes beyond policy to challenge key social values that put annual worker productivity and consumption (measured by GDP) above other values and responsibilities. We still stress that we need changes in our cultural expectations to give greater weight to these responsibilities -- to our families, communities and environment. We will also argue that such changes can play an important role in improving our health (now ranked #37 by the WHO), this decreasing the pressures on, and cost of, our health care system. As such, such policies can be both a benefit to business and reduce some public expenditure as well. This is an issue which has something to offer citizens and legislators across the political spectrum.

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## **We Need Your Help!**

As we move forward with this campaign we will be looking to you for your ideas and your involvement. First off, we would like you to send us **your stories of how time poverty impacts your life.**

Does your life feel out of control? Are working too many hours? Does time poverty affect your personal life or your health? Are you stretched too thin juggling work and care for your children or elderly parents? Do you get paid when you stay home sick? What would you do with more free time? And what would you like to say to your political leaders?

Send your stories to [lisa@timeday.org](mailto:lisa@timeday.org).

**We also need your financial support.** Please help us move this project forward by making a donation today. Whether it's \$20 or \$200, every little bit will make a difference. [Click here to make a contribution.](#)

The time has arrived to bring these issues into the mainstream, influence the political discussion and possibly redirect priorities in this year's campaign. Will you join us in this effort?!

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## Endorse TIME TO CARE Public Policy Agenda!

Over 200 of you have endorsed the TIME TO CARE public policy agenda -- thank you!

- **Guaranteeing paid leave for all parents for the birth or adoption of a child.** Today, only 40% of Americans are able to take advantage of the 12 weeks of unpaid leave provided by the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993.
- **Guaranteeing at least one week of paid sick leave for all workers.** Many Americans work while sick, lowering productivity and endangering other workers.
- **Guaranteeing at least three weeks of paid annual vacation leave for all workers.** Studies show that 28% of all female employees and 37% of women earning less than \$40,000 a year receive no paid vacation at all.
- **Placing a limit on the amount of compulsory overtime work that an employer can impose,** with our goal being to give employees the right to accept or refuse overtime work.
- **Making it easier for Americans to choose part-time work.** Hourly wage parity and protection of promotions and pro-rated benefits for part-time workers.
- **Making Election Day a holiday,** with the understanding that Americans need time for civic and political participation.

As we move ahead with the TIME TO CARE campaign and outreach efforts, it is more important than ever that you demonstrate your support for this agenda and send in your endorsements. **Please download, fill out and send in your TIME TO CARE public policy agenda endorsements forms TODAY!**

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## Workplace Resolutions For 2006

If you haven't seen it yet, we highly recommend you check out Joe Robinson's end of the year opinion piece about the workplace and the resolutions we need to make in 2006. Versions of this article were published both in the Los Angeles Times and on AlterNet. Check it out at: [AlterNet.org](#).

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## The Motherhood Manifesto

We are also working on an exciting new project with Joan Blades, the co-founder of [MoveOn.org](#). On Mother's Day, the Nation Press will release a new book, *The Motherhood Manifesto*, co-written by Blades and Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner, advocating paid family leave, flexible working hours, part-time parity, publicly-funded childcare and living wages for mothers, families and children. Shortly afterwards, a film with the same name and similar content will be released nationally through a program of hundreds of house parties and other gatherings organized by MoveOn members, unions, mothers' groups and other organizations. TBYT's John de Graaf is co-producing the film and Gretchen will also be working on it. The film will nicely complement our TIME TO CARE campaign as well. We are excited about this new convergence of pro-time activity. We hope you will want to organize a house party for the screening of the film in June. Please let us know.

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## Take Back Your Time Day Reports

We've received a few more reports from Take Back Your Time Day 2005, including our first reported event in Europe!

**From Madrid, Spain**

We held an event in conjunction with the annual **Biocultura Fair**. Carlos Fresneda, author and journalist, was invited to give a talk on the issue "Time Is Life." I met with Carlos and his friend Eduardo Jauregui the day before to plan our talk and generate ideas about how to start a Take Back Your Time project in Spain. On Sunday I went to the fair a couple of hours early and passed out leaflets publicizing the talk. When I got to the auditorium, a lot of people were already waiting at the entrance. In fact we had to leave the door open cause there was not enough room for everyone. First, Eduardo spoke about "time" and how we are affected by the lack of it. Then Carlos spoke about time poverty in the US and the Take Back Your Time organization. I spoke about wanting to start Take Back Your Time in Spain, and compared our situation in Spain to other countries. I talked about my personal experience and the need to organize in Spain, because we also have a problem with the lack of time and we should start doing something about it. The audience responded quite well, and there were a lot of questions. After the talk, some participants expressed interest in starting to get organized and offered spaces where we could meet. The next week I sent out a follow-up email and received many positive responses about organizing Take Back Your Time in Spain. -- Susana Saiz, Take Back Your Time, Madrid

### **From Iowa City, IA**

We brought Carl Honore, author of *In Praise of Slowness: How a Worldwide Movement is Challenging the Cult of Speed*, for our Take Back Your Time week in October, and his visit was a huge success! Carl's talk at the Iowa City Library was overflowing--we had over 300 people show up in a room that holds a maximum of 200. The extra 100 attendees listened from the children's story room where they sat on the floor surrounded by stuffed animals! We had excellent turnout at Carl's talk at Kirkwood Community College as well--altogether about 250 people turned out and another 30 people saw him on closed-circuit television. Another 100 students attended Carl's talk at the University of Iowa, and we had 60 people at his slow food banquet, bringing his face-to-face audience total to over 700. Carl was a panel member on a half hour local television program that was viewed by over 40,000 people, and he did two radio appearances that have audiences in the thousands. We also had good print coverage. There were articles in each of the local papers (Cedar Rapids and Iowa City), and two articles in the University of Iowa Daily Iowan (circulation of 35,000). Carl's visit to Iowa City was sponsored by: Kirkwood Community College, Humanities Iowa, Iowa City Public Library, and Leisure Studies, Division of Interdisciplinary Programs, the University of Iowa -- Bob Sessions, Kirkwood Community College

**Thanks to Susana and Bob and all those involved in organizing these events!**

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## **Review Of New Film About Overwork: Who Needs Sleep?**

by Gretchen Burger

Two weeks ago I packed up my bags and headed off for a week of film indulgence at the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah. I saw a lot of films -- the schedule was definitely overscheduled -- but the highlight of my week was seeing WHO NEEDS SLEEP?, a new film by Haskell Wexler about overwork in the film industry. As a filmmaker and TBYTer, the opportunity to go to Sundance and watch a film by the preeminent American cinematographer about overwork was, well, quite a treat.

WHO NEEDS SLEEP? is rare look at the Hollywood that works behind the camera, putting in 16, 18, 20 hour days to bring us our big screen entertainment. Wexler, who has spent 50 plus years in the industry and has watched the work day double from when he got started, is at the center of the film, interviewing crew members, union leaders, OSHA regulators, sleep specialists, and celebrities--Julia Roberts, Tom Hanks, Billy Crystal and Paul Newman -- to expose the industry standard long work day.

The death of two colleagues and Wexler's own brush with death, falling asleep at the wheel after a long shoot day, underscore the severity of the problem in an industry where long days, heavy equipment and high voltage are the norm. Not only is it the people on the set who are at risk, it's the workers themselves and everyone on the road when these tired workers climb into their cars to commute home, or rise after just a few hours of sleep to return to work.

Finding no recourse with the studios, a total lack of leadership from the unions, and no legal protections for freelance workers, Wexler and his colleagues took up the cause to lobby for change. After the death of Camera Assistant Brent Hershman, they created the Brent's Rule petition asking production companies, movie studios, and the industry to limit the work day to 14 hours. More recently, they've formed the **12on-12off** campaign, which advocates for a 12 hour day

with 12 hours off in between. The campaign passes out t-shirts and caps with the 12on-12off logo to crew members to wear on the job.

My one concern about the film was how people who are not connected to the film industry would respond to it, and then I learned about the screening which was held in Salt Lake City. Very few industry people were in the audience and yet the themes of the Q & A were the same: working too many hours, lost time with family, not enough sleep.

WHO NEEDS SLEEP? is Wexler's rallying cry to place some limits on the film industry's long work days, and the industry would be smart to heed his call: Wexler did some of his best, academy-award-winning work putting in just 8 hours a day.

We will keep you posted on the film's distribution and upcoming screenings. To learn more, check out: [www.WhoNeedsSleep.net](http://www.WhoNeedsSleep.net) .

*WHO NEEDS SLEEP? was directed by Haskell Wexler and Lisa Leeman, and produced by Tamara Maloney.*

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## **A Short Animation That Pretty Much Sums It All Up**

In celebration of SLOW DOWN WEEK, January 15-21, the folks at Adbusters created a terrific animation that pretty much sums up time poverty, in less than a minute. Click below to check it out!

[www.Adbusters.org](http://www.Adbusters.org)

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## **Class Action Suit Against Canadian Banks**

This announcement came to us from Bruce O'Hara of Courteney, BC. A class action suit is being drawn together to seek redress from Canadian banks, which are known for imposing large amounts of unpaid overtime on their employees, despite making record profits. If you know anyone who works at a Canadian bank and has complained to you about the amount of unpaid overtime they are working, please make sure they get this website address: [www.rochongenova.com/overtime.aspx](http://www.rochongenova.com/overtime.aspx). It could be worth thousands of dollars to them, and save them from burning out.

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## **Project From The Haste Makes Waste Class**

Students in the fall 2005 Haste Makes Waste class at the Evergreen State College created some terrific projects ranging in theme from recess to time management, and we will showcase some of these in the next few newsletters. This month we want to share with you Audrey Holiens's PowerPoint presentation about how the media covered the passage of the Paid Family Leave Legislation in California, which was passed in 2004. Audrey examined hundreds of news stories for this project. We are also proud to present Raven Jirikovic, Joe Vansyckle, Caitlin McIntyre, and Bernie Irish's project on recess, "Recess: Time Well Spent." Thank you to all the students for creating these terrific resources!

- **Media Coverage: Medical/Family Leave** -- PowerPoint Download

*This is a large file that may take several minutes to download.  
PowerPoint required for viewing!*

- **Recess: Time Well Spent** -- PDF Download

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## **No Family Leave Insurance Bill For Washington In 2006**

by Evan Briggs

*This article was written for the newsletter -- thank you to Evan Briggs for her contribution. If you have an article you'd like to share with us, send your submission to: [lisa@timeday.org](mailto:lisa@timeday.org)*

When the Family Leave Insurance bill was first introduced in 2001, it was largely regarded by its supporters as a safety net for working families. By providing a wage replacement of \$250 per week, the bill was designed to protect workers for whom taking unpaid leave in order to care for a seriously ill family member or themselves would not be financially feasible. Additionally, the bill would have guaranteed five weeks of job protected leave for all employees who had worked a minimum of 680 hours in the previous year, and would be funded by a new payroll tax estimated at 2 cents an hour to be shared by workers and employees. Speaking in support of her legislation on the state Senate floor, Senator Karen Keiser noted, "This doesn't cost. This benefits. It benefits employers, it benefits employees. And most of all, it benefits families." The sentiment was echoed by co-sponsor, Representative Mary Lou Dickerson, "If we're serious about strengthening families, this legislation is the next step." The bill was expected to improve morale in the workplace, reduce absenteeism and turnover, and therefore garnered the support of many businesses in the community. Though during its third introduction in 2005, the bill was approved by the state Senate on March 15, it did not pass in the House of Representatives. And without significant change in the current political climate, its chances of passing next year are slim.

Rather than rally support for a bill whose time seemingly has yet to come, the Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI), a non-profit, non-partisan public policy institute largely responsible for raising public awareness on the issue, has decided to table the bill temporarily in favor of less controversial legislation. "We change the bill we're proposing depending on the political climate, the composition of the legislature, and the likelihood of passage. We also favor bills that we feel will act as good vehicles of public discussion," explains Marilyn Watkins, Policy Director for the EOI, "The first thing we're pushing that we think has a reasonable chance of passing in 2006 is an expansion of the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for Washington."

Established in 1993 under the Clinton administration, the FMLA largely replaced Washington's Family Leave Act of 1989, which allowed a parent employed by a company of 100 or more workers to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave in order to care for a new baby or a terminally ill child. Under FLMA, those guidelines were expanded to include care of a newly placed adoptive or foster child, or a seriously ill child, spouse, or parent. Further changes included a reduction in the number of workers employed by the company to a minimum of 50, a minimum of one year of employment, and at least 1,250 hours on the job within the previous year. Under current eligibility requirements, only 60% of Washington workers are protected under FMLA, and even those benefits may be in jeopardy.

According to Watkins, the U.S. Department of Labor is in the process of redefining the regulations that currently dictate FMLA, such as reassessing the definition of a serious health condition and revising the terms under which intermittent leave may be taken. "The Department of Labor is likely to change the rules in ways that are disadvantageous to workers, so we are trying to protect the benefits citizens currently have under federal law by creating a state version," explains Watkins. Ideally, Washington's FMLA will include the care of a domestic partner as covered by family members, and extend benefits to include firms with a minimum of 25 employees, an expansion Oregon passed in 1995. If successful, these provisions are expected to provide coverage to an additional 330,000 Washington workers.

The second bill being pushed by the EOI in next year's legislative session is a minimum employment standard of one week of paid sick leave per six months (or two weeks per year), an amount that would be pro-rated for part-time employees. Paid sick leave would cover illness of the worker, doctor visits, or illness of an immediate family member, subject to medical certification if required by the employer. According to the National Partnership for Women and Families, 47% of American workers in private firms do not have any paid sick leave, and many who do are not able to use it to care for a sick child or parent. The U.S. is in fact one of few nations in the world without a minimum standard of paid leave. State Senator Karen Keiser and Representative Mary Lou Dickerson remain the prime sponsors for the proposed legislation regarding a Washington FMLA and a minimum standard of paid sick leave.

Despite some disappointing setbacks, Watkins remains fairly optimistic. "There are certainly many businesses who are happy to provide good benefits to their employees, and who are quite supportive of these proposals. In fact, a number of business owners supported the [family leave insurance] bill," claims Watkins, "The faith community, labor unions, women's organizations like NOW and the Association of University Women, children's advocacy groups, and senior groups such as AARP have all been supportive as well." Business lobbies, which tend to take an idealist position on the use of minimal government mandates, compose the majority of the opposition. The Association of Washington

Business, The Washington Retail Association, and the National Federation of Independent Businesses have all taken strong positions against family leave insurance, as well as the creation of a state version of FMLA. At present, California, Hawaii, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island are among the only states to offer paid disability leave to all of their workers.

The long-term agenda of the EOI includes a continuation of efforts to secure paid leave for all workers, extending the protections offered by the FMLA to a larger percentage of the workforce, and establishing a minimum standard of vacation days.

What you can do to help:

- Write your legislators and express your support for these bills. You can find your district at [www1.leg.wa.gov/legislature/](http://www1.leg.wa.gov/legislature/) or by calling 1-800-562-6000.
- If you are a business owner or have a good story about needing paid leave from work and are willing to be featured in news stories or testify before a legislative committee, contact Marilyn Watkins at the Economic Opportunity Institute: 206-529-6370 or [marilyn@eoionline.org](mailto:marilyn@eoionline.org).
- If you read an article in your local paper pertaining either to the proposed legislation or a related issue, such as preparing for a bird flu pandemic, write a letter to the editor emphasizing the need for legislative action in order to ensure a healthy working environment for all workers.

*Evan Briggs is a writer and filmmaker who lives in Seattle, WA.*

**Editor's Note:** The minimum paid sick leave bill did not pass out of committee before cut off, so will not be considered further this session. The FMLA bill did make it out of committee. If you live in Washington, please call or e-mail your state legislators. Urge them to support the FMLA bill, SB 6185 and HB 2392.

Find your district and your legislators: [apps.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/Default.aspx](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/Default.aspx)

Toll free legislative hotline: 1-800-562-6000.

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## **New Take Back Your Time Board Member**

Take Back Your Time has a new board member: **Gregory Wright**. Greg is a Los Angeles-based 'social inventor,' co-creator of the **Global Ideas Bank**, a designer of ad-hoc timely projects (e.g., 'Eco-Driving' and Solar Retrofit Architecture), and a journalist specializing in progressive politics and sustainability. Welcome Greg!

And we also want to take this opportunity to thank all our board members for their efforts and support!

**Finally, we'd like to thank Arlene Richardson for supporting the distribution of this newsletter, a gift that she bought at the Alternative Gift Fair in Ithaca, NY.**

We want to know what you're thinking. Send your thoughts, opinions, your stories of how time poverty impacts your life, and essay submissions to [lisa@timeday.org](mailto:lisa@timeday.org). Thank you!

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