

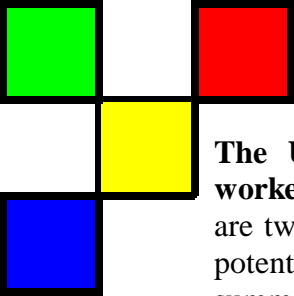


THE CASE FOR A PAID VACATION LAW

**Here are some basic arguments about
why a paid vacation law makes so
much sense.**



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The US is the **ONLY** industrial nation without paid vacation protections for workers—137 nations, including many poor countries, have such protections. There are two primary cases for a policy change, and several minor ones—that can increase the potential coalition that will surely gather to support this unique and *bold* move. Here is a summary of the cases which can be made and the constituencies they will bring to the table:

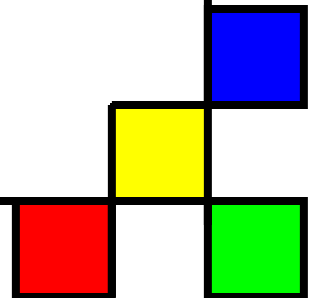
1. **This is essential for families.** Families need vacation time to strengthen connections. But one-third fewer families are taking vacations together. Family expert Bill Doherty of the University of Minnesota points out that the bonding that takes place during vacations is the family time most remembered by children when they become adults. And families are losing this connection. A third fewer families are taking vacations together today compared with a generation ago. Vacation is a family value. It's about families having a block of time for each other that is relatively free from competing stresses. Family organizations will support this.

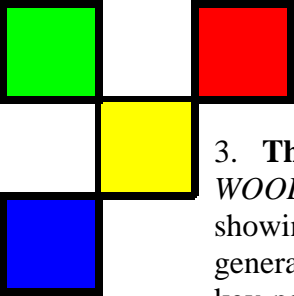


2. **This is essential for health.** At a time when skyrocketing health care costs are at the top of public agendas, it is also clear that Americans' health outcomes are the worst among rich countries. Increasing evidence shows that this is the result of overwork and time pressures, which increase Americans' stress levels and reduce their opportunities for exercise, healthy eating habits and connections with family and friends (the latter is the most significant predictor of good health). Numerous studies show the value of vacation in reducing heart disease (the Framingham Heart study finds that women who do not take vacations are **eight** (!) times more likely to suffer from heart disease as those who do; another study found that regular vacations cut men's risk of death from a heart attack by 32%), but most show that a block of time—roughly two weeks—is necessary for positive health outcomes. Yet only 14% of Americans took a 2-week or longer vacation in 2007; only 57% took even a one-week block.



Doctors will line up behind this initiative, and Group Health, Washington State's largest medical provider has now made a priority of encouraging people to take vacations as a preventive health measure. The difficulty is that 25% of workers get no paid vacation and others find it hard to take the vacation time their contracts call for, because of growing job pressures and downsizing. Healthcare providers will support this as a cost-reduction measure. Mental health is affected too. A 2005 study by NIOSH (the National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety) found that women who take regular vacation were half as likely to suffer from depression than those who do not.



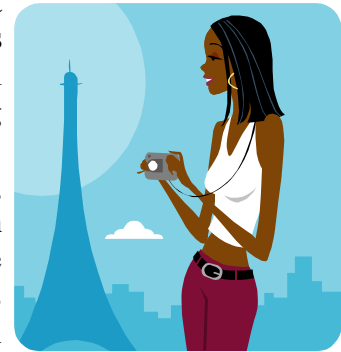


3. **This is essential for children.** With his best-seller, *THE LAST CHILD IN THE WOODS*, Richard Louv initiated the rapidly-growing *No Child Left Inside* movement, showing that children today have less than half as much contact with nature as they did a generation ago. Impacts include obesity and childhood hyperactivity. Louv attributes a key part of this to the loss of family vacations. An article on these connections, by Joe Robinson, appears in the May, June 2008 issue of *Sierra* magazine. The environmental groups which are working on this issue will eagerly support the call for paid leave. So will America's numerous hunters and fishers who want more time off to introduce their children to the joys of their activities.



4. **This is essential for the tourist industry and parks.** The initiative will find strong support from the tourism industry which has been hurt by reductions in vacation time. The National Recreation and Parks Association, with scores of small business and public park members is eager to support this (Joe Robinson and I were speakers at NRPA's national convention this year). National Park and National Forest leaders have seen a troubling decline in visitors. Fran Mainella,

President Bush's recently resigned National Park Director, supports efforts to win more vacation time, showing bi-partisan support for the plan. Another small business coalition, the Adventure Travel Trade Association, based in Seattle, has endorsed the call for minimum paid vacation, and Shannon Stowell, its president is eager to mobilize his hundreds of member businesses to support this.

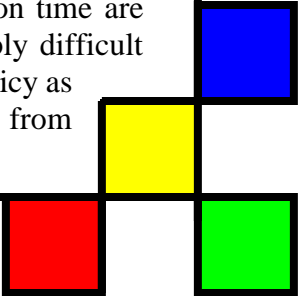


5. **This is essential for social justice.** Low-income workers are the least likely to receive any paid vacation time. 31% receive no paid leave at all. Many are working two or three jobs to provide for their families. Nearly fifty percent more female than male workers are denied paid vacation time. According the ASK A WOMAN WORKER survey of the AFL-CIO, 37% of women earning less than \$40,000 a year do not receive paid vacations.

6. **This is essential for young people.** Young voters want time and respond powerfully to the vacation message, as I have found during speeches at dozens of universities. Young voters, particularly college students, would appreciate political leaders' concern for this issue and would mobilize to help.



7. **This is essential for older people.** Seniors and retired persons increasingly live farther away from their children and grandchildren. They want time with them, but know that it's hard for their children to find time to come and see them. At the same time, many older workers who are laid off from jobs where they have accrued adequate vacation time are only able to find new jobs that give them a week off or less. This is a terribly difficult transition and it would not be necessary if we had a reasonable paid vacation policy as every other industrial country does. I believe the initiative would find support from AARP and other groups of seniors on this.



8. **This is essential for productivity and creativity.**

Many small and large businesses, particularly in the fields of information technology and other “brain-work” areas have found that extended periods of time off increase worker productivity and decrease turnover. A New Zealand study found that workers sleep better after taking vacations and are 30-40% more alert on the job when they return. Vacation is not a “slacker” issue. Free time is an essential ingredient of successful capitalist economies.

European countries that provide extensive mandated paid leave are doing well economically—the Euro is surging while the dollar is sinking—and many Americans are investing heavily in the European economy.



9. **This is an essential values issue.** It raises the question: what do we do with progress and who decides? Do we put all our gains in productivity into more and more stuff, increasingly skewed toward the few, or do we put some of it into more leisure to use for our families, our health and other things important to us. And shouldn't that choice be a public choice, left to democratic institutions and not simply the whims of employers? Churches, particularly, and all other organizations which are concerned about the *non-material values* in life will support this and we can expect the full endorsement of mainstream churches and probably that of many conservative church leaders as well.

10. **The media LOVES this issue.** We are overwhelmed with interest by mainstream media in the vacation issue. Each summer, dozens of publications and radio/TV programs contact Take Back Your Time to talk about these issues. Their reports are consistently supportive. Even major newspapers, like the Salt Lake Tribune, have editorialized in favor of vacation policies. We can expect an eager response to this from state media and supportive editorials in major newspapers.

11. **We are ready to move.** We have a stable of experts, from different walks of life—labor, environment, families, doctors and health professionals, small businesses, tourism, ready to be spokespeople for this issue if the governor takes the lead and calls for a paid vacation policy initiative.

I am prepared to meet with anyone to talk about this issue. I believe polling will show widespread support for this and would love to be included in any discussion of the framing of polling questions and focus group discussions.

There will be some pushback from business on this, but in my meetings with small businesspeople, I do believe they understand the value of a vacation policy and want to make something work. A committee will need to work with them to discern the specifics of any initiative proposed, and to find incentives that can help them through the transition period once a law is passed, but research shows they will find the benefits of such a law will quickly be passed on to them as well.

👉 Lets move on this! There's no present like the time 👈