

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Lynn Woolsey  
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Workforce Protections Subcommittee  
Hearing on “The Impact of Women’s Growing Participation in the  
Workforce: A Woman’s Nation Changes Everything”  
Friday, November 13, 2009**

**THANKS TO EVERYONE FOR COMING TO  
THIS HEARING ON “THE IMPACT OF  
WOMEN’S GROWING PARTICIPATION IN  
THE WORKFORCE: A WOMAN’S NATION  
CHANGES EVERYTHING.”**

**TODAY, IF A CHILD IS FORTUNATE TO HAVE  
TWO PARENTS, MOST OF THEM WORK  
OUTSIDE THE HOME AND COMMUTE LONG  
HOURS.**

AND IN A SINGLE-PARENT HOME IT IS  
ALMOST CERTAIN TO BE TRUE.

SO BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY IS A  
VERY REAL CHALLENGE FOR MILLIONS OF  
WORKERS IN THIS COUNTRY AND IS  
EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO THEIR  
CHILDREN.

I AM DELIGHTED THAT **THE FIRST LADY OF  
CALIFORNIA, MARIA SHRIVER**, ALONG  
WITH **THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN  
PROGRESS**, IS FULLY ENGAGED ON THIS  
ISSUE.

**THE SHRIVER REPORT SHINES A BRIGHT LIGHT ON THE WORK-LIFE BALANCING DILEMMA AND MAKES THE POINT THAT-- EVEN THOUGH WOMEN NOW COMPRISE ONE-HALF OF THE U.S. WORKFORCE--OUR POLICIES TO HELP WORKING FAMILIES ARE BADLY OUTDATED.**

**IT FINDS INSTEAD THAT THE “TYPICAL” FAMILY STRUCTURE HAS CHANGED, AND IN 2009, ONLY ONE-FIFTH OF FAMILIES CONSISTS OF A HUSBAND WHO WORKS, AND A WIFE WHO STAYS HOME TO CARE FOR THE CHILDREN.**

AND THAT MEN AS WELL AS WOMEN ARE  
DESPERATE FOR FAMILY-FRIENDLY  
POLICIES.

FOR THOSE OF US WHO HAVE ALWAYS BEEN  
IN THE WORKFORCE, THE FINDINGS OF **THE  
SHRIVER REPORT** ARE MUSIC TO OUR  
EARS.

MANY YEARS AGO, WHEN MY CHILDREN  
WERE NOT PARENTS THEMSELVES, I WAS  
WORKING FULL-TIME OUTSIDE THE HOME.

IT WAS A STRUGGLE TO MEET BOTH THE  
NEEDS OF MY FAMILY AS WELL AS THE  
RESPONSIBILITIES OF MY JOB.

EARLY ON I DIDN'T HAVE SICK LEAVE AND  
CERTAINLY NOT FAMILY AND MEDICAL  
LEAVE.

BUT EVEN WHEN I COULD AFFORD TO TAKE  
TIME OFF TO CARE FOR A SICK CHILD, THE  
PRESSURE FROM THE WORKPLACE WAS  
OVERWHELMING.

IF I STAYED HOME, I WORRIED ABOUT MY  
JOB, AND IF I WENT TO WORK, I WORRIED  
ABOUT MY CHILD.

UNFORTUNATELY, SOME 30 YEARS LATER,  
PARENTS ARE STILL CONCERNED ABOUT  
THE SAME THINGS.

THAT IS ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS I RAN  
FOR **CONGRESS** OVER 16 YEARS AGO: TO  
FIGHT FOR WORKING FAMILIES.

I WAS A NEW MEMBER WHEN WE PASSED  
**THE FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (F-  
M-L-A)**, BUT I KNEW WHAT AN IMPORTANT  
STEP WE WERE TAKING—PARTICULARILY  
FOR WORKING WOMEN—TO PROVIDE **JOB-  
PROTECTED** FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE  
FOR CERTAIN WORKERS, EVEN THOUGH IT  
WAS UNPAID.

OVER THE YEARS WE HAVE LEARNED A  
LOT.

WHILE MORE THAN 100 MILLION LEAVES  
HAVE BEEN TAKEN UNDER THE **FMLA**,  
NEARLY 2 IN 3 WORKERS ARE NOT COVERED  
BY THE ACT, AND EVEN IF THEY ARE, MOST  
CAN'T TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ITS  
PROVISIONS BECAUSE THEY CANNOT  
AFFORD TO TAKE UNPAID LEAVE.

AS THE **SHRIVER REPORT** POINTS OUT, WE  
ARE NOW IN THE **21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**, THE  
WORLD HAS CHANGED, AND WORKERS  
SHOULD NOT HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN  
THEIR JOBS OR THEIR FAMILIES.



IN SHORT, WE NEED **21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**  
SOLUTIONS.

THAT IS WHY I HAVE INTRODUCED THE  
**BALANCING ACT**, WHICH LAYS OUT THE  
ROLE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN  
PLAY IN HELPING TO BALANCE WORK AND  
FAMILY.

THE BILL ENCOMPASSES THE SUGGESTIONS  
FOR REFORM IN **THE SHRIVER REPORT**  
AND INCLUDES ALL THE THINGS THAT  
FAMILIES NEED IN THEIR WORK AND IN  
THEIR LIVES.

**TITLE I OF THE ACT IS TAKEN FROM  
REPRESENTATIVE STARKS' LEGISLATION  
AND PROVIDES FOR UP TO 12 WEEKS OF  
PAID FAMILY LEAVE IN THE CASE OF BIRTH  
OR ADOPTION, OR TO TAKE CARE OF  
ONESELF OR A SICK FAMILY MEMBER.**

**TITLE I ALSO PROVIDES LEAVE FOR  
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND FAMILY  
WELLNESS, AND EXPANDS THE FMLA TO  
ADDITIONALLY COVER THOSE EMPLOYEES  
WHO WORK FOR EMPLOYERS WITH 15 OR  
MORE EMPLOYEES.**

AND IT COVERS SAME SEX-PARTNERS, AND  
ALLOWS WORKERS TIME OFF TO ADDRESS  
THE EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

FINALLY, **TITLE I** INCORPORATES  
**REPRESENTATIVE DELAURO'S HEALTHY  
FAMILIES ACT**, WHICH PROVIDES UP TO 7  
DAYS OF SICK LEAVE FOR WORKERS.

**TITLE II** OF THE **BALANCING ACT** EXPANDS  
ACCESS TO CHILD CARE, AND **TITLE III**  
STRENGTHENS PRE-SCHOOL, IN-SCHOOL,  
AND AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS.

FINALLY, **TITLE IV** ENCOURAGES  
TELEWORK AND PROVIDES FOR EQUITABLE  
TREATMENT OF PART-TIME AND  
TEMPORARY WORKERS UNDER PENSION  
PLANS AND GROUP HEALTH INSURANCE.

IN SHORT, **THE BALANCING ACT** IS A  
BLUEPRINT FOR WORK-FAMILY BALANCE  
AND ENSURING THE PASSAGE OF ALL OF ITS  
PROVISIONS IS MY ULTIMATE GOAL.

TODAY, WE WILL BE HEARING FROM AN  
OUTSTANDING PANEL OF WITNESSES.

THROUGH THE LENS OF **THE SHRIVER  
REPORT**, THEY WILL TESTIFY ABOUT THE  
OBSTACLES WORKERS FACE IN TRYING TO  
BALANCE WORK AND FAMILY IN TODAY'S  
WORLD.

AND THEY WILL MAKE THE CASE THAT  
POLICIES TO HELP THIS BALANCE ARE  
ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL.

THE **U.S.** LAGS BEHIND THE REST OF THE  
WORLD IN PROVIDING FAMILY-FRIENDLY  
BENEFITS TO EMPLOYEES.

IT IS UNACCEPTABLE THAT THIS COUNTRY,  
WHICH IS THE NUMBER ONE ECONOMY IN  
THE WORLD--CAN BARELY COMPETE WITH  
DEVELOPING NATIONS IN THIS ARENA.

AGAIN THANK YOU FOR COMING, AND I  
LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM OUR  
WITNESSES.