

# PROGRAM ON A PAGE (or two)

## FAMILY FRIENDLY WORKPLACES

### **AAUW's Commitment**

The American Association of University Women believes that creating environments that help employees balance the responsibilities of work and family is a good policy. AAUW's 2007-2009 Public Policy Program supports "greater availability and access to benefits and policies that create a family-friendly workplace environment," which are critical for women "for equitable access and advancement in employment."

### **What is Family and Medical Leave?**

The Family and Medical Leave Act helps employees balance the increasing demands of work and family at little or no cost to employees. FMLA allows eligible women and men who work for employers with fifty or more employees to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave each year for certain family and medical purposes. However, despite the Family and Medical Leave Act, family and personal sick leave remain elusive to many working Americans. Family-oriented workplace policies in the United States lag dramatically behind those in much of the rest of the world. For example, the U.S. is only one of five countries that do not guarantee some form of paid maternity leave, a distinction it shares with Lesotho, Liberia, Swaziland, and Papua New Guinea.

### **Expanding the Family and Medical Leave Act**

Members of Congress have discussed a variety of proposals to expand the FMLA to cover more Americans and more family and medical needs. AAUW supports the following FMLA enhancements:

- Lower the eligibility threshold for employers from 50 or more employees to 25 or more employees.
- Allow covered and eligible employees to take up to 24 hours of leave per year to participate in their children's academic school activities or literacy training.
- Include FMLA benefits for victims of domestic violence.
- Expand the definition of family member under the FMLA to include siblings, domestic partners, and adult children.

Despite the important achievements of the law and evidence of its benefits to workers, AAUW and other organizations continue to fight attacks on significant gains. AAUW will continue to oppose all efforts to weaken the Family and Medical Leave Act protections, which would limit women's opportunities in the workplace. AAUW will also work to advance policies that will

improve workplaces for employees with family responsibilities of all kinds. Such protections and improvements are critical to women's equal opportunity and economic security.