

WHEN MOMS RISE

THE STORY OF PAID FAMILY AND
MEDICAL LEAVE ADVOCACY
IN WASHINGTON STATE

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This is the story of how the lived experiences of moms, dads, grandparents, small business owners, and community members, just like YOU, helped grow a movement to WIN a best-in-nation paid family and medical leave program in Washington State.

After decades of advocacy, and incremental victories, by MomsRising and partners like the Washington Work and Family Coalition, legislators from both sides of the aisle came together in 2017 to pass a paid family and medical leave policy for all Washington workers. Thanks to the power of multi-layer engagement organizing and opening multiple avenues of advocacy for busy parents and family members, the voices of Washington families were brought right to the negotiation table and paved the way for this bipartisan victory.

Our story doesn't stop here! Read on to learn more about how the individual and collective power of families helped make this victory possible...and get a preview of Washington State's happily ever after ending!

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A Washington Without Paid Family and Medical Leave

Nothing should keep you from caring for a loved one battling cancer, being with a parent nearing their final days, or bonding with a new baby. But that has been the case for families across Washington State for far too long. Until paid family and medical leave was passed by the Washington State Legislature in 2017, state laws failed to meet the needs of working families and businesses.

In fact, MomsRising hears from Washingtonians each and every day about the challenges they face prioritizing family in times of joy and times of sorrow, all while risking the paycheck that puts a roof overhead and food on the table. Studies also show that worker productivity, businesses, and the economy are boosted when people have access to paid leave policies in times of critical need. This is the picture of a Washington without paid family and medical leave:

“My 3-year-old daughter was diagnosed with kidney cancer. I'm a single mom of three young children. I had to relocate to Seattle to take her to Children's Hospital. It was one week and I had taken all of my sick leave, then a few more days until I'd taken all my vacation pay. I had no leave left so I had to continue to work. I commuted 300 miles every week for about 16 months. Not having paid family leave devastated us in many ways. I can't capture the impact of not being able to be with my daughter or my other kids on their growth and development.”

– Heather, Spokane

“My husband has cancer. He is working when he shouldn't because we have no paid leave - and he is a software architect, leading a software division in a small company. This should not be the case.”

– Sarah, Liberty Lake

“As a currently pregnant mother, the reality of preparing for maternity leave means banking my vacation hours, working overtime, and scheduling my many doctors appointments in the early morning to avoid taking extra time off. Childbirth is expensive and the last thing families need at a time of huge costs is a giant hole in their budget.”

– Angela, Seattle

“Three years ago, my very good friend was terminally ill and so her son, daughter, daughter-in-law [my daughter] all took FMLA to help care for her the last few weeks of her life. None of them had very much paid leave, if any at all. They had to deal with the pain of losing a loved one and the stress of trying to catch up with bills. Today, they are still having a very rough time financially. I see the pain and stress in their lives as they struggle to make ends meet. If they would have had paid leave, it would have lessened the burden that they are feeling.”

– Martha, Shelton

“I have had two children now with no paid maternity leave. I was forced to use all of my sick and vacation time and then was on leave without pay. Each birth was a cesarean birth and over half of my leave was spent recuperating from major abdominal surgery. I am now back to work for the second week after the birth of my daughter. I have zero sick or vacation time to take in case I need to care for my children or myself in the next month. I have to pay my own health insurance as well because I was short on hours. That is a heavy load for a new mom. Parenting is the most rewarding and satisfying role I can imagine. I wish it were made a little easier by providing paid maternity leave.”

– Jessica, Port Angeles

“I am very lucky to be working in a supportive workplace. When I had my son six weeks early they were very flexible and gave me all the time I needed. I was able to take two and a half months off to spend time in the NICU with my son then be at home while he grew stronger. The only problem was that I did not get paid for any of that time. We went into debt due to hospital bills and my lost paychecks. We will be paying this off for a while. The birth of my amazing baby boy has been a roadblock toward us potentially buying a house because of this debt. We will get there someday but the road keeps getting longer.”

– Amanda,
Federal Way



Paid Family Leave's First Victory

SUMMARY

In 1998, the Washington Work and Family Coalition – led by the Economic Opportunity Institute – began building a coalition, including organized labor, to pass paid family leave in Washington State. MomsRising was launched and joined the fight in 2006 by bringing the voices of moms, dads, grandparents, and community members from across Washington State to Olympia and highlighting the urgent need for a paid family leave policy. Mountains started to move in 2007 when the Washington State Legislature passed paid family leave for the first time.



THE MOMSRISING STORY

In May of 2006, MomsRising was founded as a national organization with its main office in Washington State. One of the top priorities of the organization out of the gates was to move forward paid family leave, starting in Washington State – and we began organizing moms, dads, and families to fight for this critical policy. Moms, dads, grandparents, and community members from across Washington State joined together and, in coordination with the Washington Work and Family Coalition, helped pass paid family leave for the first time in 2007.

This was a big win! MomsRising members from across Washington State showed up in force to make this win happen. Hundreds of MomsRising members came together to create the “Power of ONEsie” campaign by decorating onesies to visually represent all the Washingtonians who supported family-friendly policies, like paid family leave, but couldn’t be in Olympia in person. The chain of onesies was displayed in the middle of the Capitol and helped put this issue on center stage for Washington legislators.



“ The Family Leave bill would not have passed without the great work of MomsRising. Being able to mobilize thousands of constituents to e-mail our Governor and individual lawmakers made all the difference! It’s a great model for an authentic political movement made up of people who are unable to attend rallies or raise huge amounts of campaign donations. It’s a way for real people to make a real difference. ”

– **Senator Karen Keiser (D, 33rd District)**
Prime sponsor of the Paid Family Leave bill in the Senate

Our work didn't stop there! Together, we delivered over 14,000 letters of support, made hundreds of phone calls, baked and delivered 600 cookies to elected officials to encourage their support, published a citizen vote count showing broad support for paid family leave, and more throughout the legislative session.

“ When the vote in the House seemed in jeopardy, we needed an impactful way to influence legislators beyond making calls and e-mails. What better way to reach legislators than through their stomachs? I recruited a group of moms to bake 50 dozen cookies in a very short time. Within days of the crucial House vote, 600+ cookies were delivered to all 98 representatives with hopes of leaving a powerful impression in their minds (and stomachs!). I was overwhelmed at the quick response from the moms willing to help out on such short notice despite their hectic schedules. We'll never know what kind of impact a little 'ole batch of cookies made, but I like to think it pushed at least one or two votes over the edge! ”



– **Marisa, MomsRising Member**

The good news was that Washington State finally passed a paid family leave policy! The bad news was that the Legislature was ultimately unable to fund the program and, as a result, Washington families could not benefit from paid family leave...yet. MomsRising members were undeterred! They saw the power of their individual and collective action and buckled in for the years of advocacy ahead.



Incremental Wins on Family-Friendly Policies

As advocacy continued at the state level, MOMentum was building at the local level on family-friendly policies, including paid sick leave and paid family and medical leave, for residents and municipal employees. Collectively, these local victories demonstrated increased and broad support for policies that increase financial security, health, and well-being for families, promote sustainable businesses, and boost the economy.



- 2006** ○ MomsRising is founded and begins organizing in Washington State.
- 2007** ○ Washington State Legislature passes (unfunded) Paid Family Leave.
- 2011** ○ Seattle passes Paid Sick and Safe Time ordinance providing paid time off for workers who are sick, need to care for a sick loved one, or who are victims of domestic violence and need time away from work to assist law enforcement or attend court hearings. *Seattle was just the third city in the nation to pass such an ordinance. Advocates worked quickly to introduce similar legislation in the State Legislature.
- 2013** ○ Voters in SeaTac pass the “Good Jobs Initiative” extending paid sick time to workers throughout the city and at SeaTac airport and increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour.
- 2014** ○ The first statewide paid sick leave bill passes the State House but stalls in the Senate.
- 2015** ○ King County grants 12 weeks of paid parental leave to County employees.
 - Tacoma requires all private sector employers to offer paid sick and safe leave.
 - City of Seattle passes 4 weeks of paid parental leave for City employees.
- 2016** ○ City of Spokane passes earned sick and safe leave ordinance.
 - Washington State voters pass Initiative 1433, universalizing earned sick leave.
- 2017** ○ City of Shoreline passes 12 weeks of paid family leave for City staff.
 - Seattle expands existing paid parental leave policy to offer 12 weeks of paid parental leave and 4 weeks of family leave to City employees.
 - Washington State Legislature passes a best-in-nation paid family and medical leave policy.





Statewide Sick and Safe Leave

In the years between when the first paid family leave law passed in Washington State in 2007 and the passage of a fully funded law in 2017, across the state, cities and towns were passing local earned paid sick days laws and increases to the minimum wage. These local victories also helped pave the way for Initiative 1433, a citizens' initiative to strengthen the statewide minimum wage and universalize earned sick days in Washington State. Led by the strategic vision and grassroots power of the Washington State Labor Council, the Raise Up Washington coalition – including MomsRising – launched a massive statewide campaign in 2016. MomsRising members hit the pavement and collected signatures in their local communities, shared information about the initiative with neighbors, and joined community events to remind voters why earned sick leave is important for moms and families. Altogether, the coalition gathered over 300,000 signatures to qualify Initiative 1433 for the 2016 ballot where it passed with nearly 60% of the vote.



What are earned sick days and why were they important to paid family and medical leave advocacy?

Earned sick days and paid family and medical leave are complementary policies that cover a spectrum of health and caregiving events that commonly arise at some point in a working person's life. Earned sick days provide workers with the opportunity to care for themselves or a loved one when they experience common illnesses like the flu for which they may need to miss a couple of days of work. Paid family and medical leave allows workers to take extended time away from work to bond with a new child and or care for themselves or a loved one experiencing a serious medical crisis such as cancer. Both policies work in tandem to boost family economic security and businesses. Passage of earned sick days helped set the stage for passage of paid family and medical leave by making the case that paid time away from work to care for family boosts businesses, employee productivity, and our economy in the long-run; and by demonstrating the grassroots power of workers and families across Washington State.



#MilitaryMonday: It's time to raise up Washington

July 4, 2016



BY:
Kurt Erickson

Grilling burgers. Family and friends. Watching fireworks. That's what usually comes to mind when people think about the Fourth of July, when we come together regardless of background or politics and celebrate our nation's independence.

Many of us also think about our brave men and women in uniform, and how we can better serve the people who served for us after they return home.

Here in my state of Washington, we have the opportunity to improve the lives of thousands of veterans in November by passing Initiative 1433, the campaign to raise the statewide minimum wage to \$13.50 phased in over four years and give every working Washingtonian the opportunity to earn paid sick and safe leave.





Local Advocacy for State Change on Paid Family & Medical Leave



SPOKANE: US Congresswoman Cathy McMorris-Rodgers, Senator Andy Billig, Representative Michael Baumgartner, and Representative Marcus Riccelli



SOUTH SEATTLE: Southeast Seattle Education Coalition and Families of Color Seattle



PUYALLUP: US Congressman Denny Heck, Representative Steve Kirby, Representative David Sawyer



VANCOUVER: Senator Ann Rivers, Senator Annette Cleveland, and Representative Sharon Wylie



WALLA WALLA: Representative Terry Nealey and Representative Mary Dye



KIRKLAND: Community leaders and families



YAKIMA: Community leaders and families



SEATTLE: Molly Moon of Molly Moon's Homemade Ice Cream and Seattle business leaders

After the passage of statewide sick and safe leave, MomsRising members were energized as ever to move a statewide paid family and medical leave policy through the finish line. In fact, MomsRising members came together in communities across Washington State to build a grassroots movement that lifted up the lived experiences of real people and the urgent need for action to leaders, to the media, to local businesses, and to the public. Their stories and activism helped set the stage for victory in the 2017 legislative session.

In 2016, more than 300 MomsRising members participated in our bipartisan Listening Tour with over a dozen stops around the state to share their experiences related to paid family and medical leave and to listen to the needs of community members, including business owners. Each Listening Tour participant shared a personal experience about a time when they needed to take time away from work to bond with a new child and or to care for themselves or a loved one during a serious medical crisis. These personal experiences created a shared understanding about the importance of this issue for all Washingtonians and made it easier to have a productive conversation about the opportunities and barriers for advancing paid family and medical leave. Finally, we asked everyone if they thought the current situation without paid family and medical leave was urgent enough to come together and break through the barriers that we all saw to advancing this policy. Universally, the answer was, “Yes.”

The Listening Tour included events in Spokane, Walla Walla, Yakima, Vancouver, Puyallup, Burlington, South Seattle, Downtown Seattle, Long Beach, Kirkland, and Mercer Island. Bipartisan local, state, and federal legislators were present, as well as business owners, at the events to hear our members' stories and share their own experiences. In fact, the tour included 3 members of Congress, 11 members of the Washington State Legislature, 17 local councilmembers, leaders of more than 35 Washington businesses, and representatives of more than 60 community agencies and organizations. Democrats, Republicans, families, and business owners alike found commonality in their experiences.

In every community, participants from different walks of life agreed that being there for family is what matters most – and a growing understanding developed that the lack of such policies hurts businesses and our economy in the long run. They agreed that everyone should have the opportunity to care for their families in times of need. And they also agreed that small businesses should have the assistance they need to help their employees to do so. A consensus was built through listening, learning, and sharing facts.





Launching Paid Family and Medical Leave to Victory

By the time the state legislative session began in 2017, grassroots MOMentum for paid family and medical leave was vast and strong. Moms, dads, and families from every legislative district in the state were educated, organized, and ready to take action. In fact, nearly 50 MomsRising members – both grownups and kids – traveled to Olympia in January to help the Washington Work and Family Coalition, which included MomsRising, launch the most progressive paid family and medical leave policy ever introduced in the Washington State Legislature. Advocates were joined by prime sponsors Senator Karen Keiser (D, 33rd District) and Representative June Robinson (D, 38th District), both decades-long leaders on paid family and medical leave.

“ When my mother was dying, I had no access to paid leave and – quite frankly – not caring for her was not an option. With the cost of daycare for my three children, I literally could not work without the option to take paid leave because financially it didn’t make sense. My family was able to make it on my husband’s salary alone, but it was a challenge. It also meant we weren’t able to save as much for our children’s college funds or our own retirement.



My father is now in hospice and I am also his primary caregiver, but there is one key difference: I was able to find a job at a local home-care company that offers paid family and medical leave. With paid leave, I can do a job that I love, give my employer my very best, and go home every day with the peace of mind that I can put my family first when I need to most.

Every day at my work, I see families from across our community struggling to care for their aging family members because they have no options. No one should be forced to choose between caring for their family and providing for them. With paid family and medical leave for all, they won’t have to. And our families, businesses, communities, our economy, and, most importantly, our children will be stronger for it. ”

– **Adriana**, a MomsRising member who shared her personal story about the importance of paid family and medical leave as part of the press conference.



Family-Fueled Advocacy

Little lobbyists are some of the most effective advocates out there. When children and families join together to share their experiences with elected officials, they're unstoppable! That's why MomsRising creates numerous accessible, family-friendly, and fun opportunities for members, many of whom live very busy lives, to advocate for the issues that matter to them most. At any one time, MomsRising members are likely to be signing an online petition, sharing a personal experience, organizing a local event, speaking with the media, meeting with an elected official, and or attending an in-person event. These opportunities make it possible for people who are directly impacted by public policy decisions to influence the decision-making process and, together, they create a powerful force for change.

For more than a decade, MomsRising members in Washington State have built a movement in support of paid family and medical leave by taking action in a way that makes sense for them and their families. In 2016-2017, there were three particular events, in addition to the many, many organizing and advocacy activities happening across the state, that had a lasting influence on legislators and their decisions.

FAMILY TIME FORUM

In October 2016, MomsRising hosted a family time forum with Governor Jay Inslee. The room was packed with more than 100 moms, dads, kids, leaders, and policy makers. Governor Inslee heard from a panel of moms, including a law student and a small business owner, about the importance of paid family and medical leave for families, businesses, and our economy. The message was clear: It was time for Washington to lead on leave. And Governor Inslee heard that message loud and clear! He spoke enthusiastically about his commitment to paid family and medical leave and other early learning opportunities families need to thrive.



FAMILY LEAVE FAMILY DANCE

Just ahead of a critical deadline to keep paid family and medical leave legislation alive during the 2017 legislative session, MomsRising hosted a family leave family dance to urge legislators to keep family leave moving! Families gathered in the middle of the Legislative Building rotunda, along with a live kids' band, to shake off the stress of having to choose between your job and your family during challenging times. While they were at it, the movers and shakers caught the attention of key legislators and had timely conversations about the importance of paid family and medical leave.



GIANT CONNECT 4

As legislators began budget negotiations during the 2017 legislative session, MomsRising's littlest members made their way to the Capitol for a giant game of Connect 4. Why? They were reminding legislators to connect children and families with the early opportunities they need to succeed, including paid family and medical leave. More than 100 toddlers — and the 40+ adults they brought along with them — joined in the fun and games and garnered a lot of attention from legislators and media outlets. The group heard from Governor Jay Inslee and even had a quick visit from U.S. Senator Patty Murray!





Making Our Voices Heard in Olympia

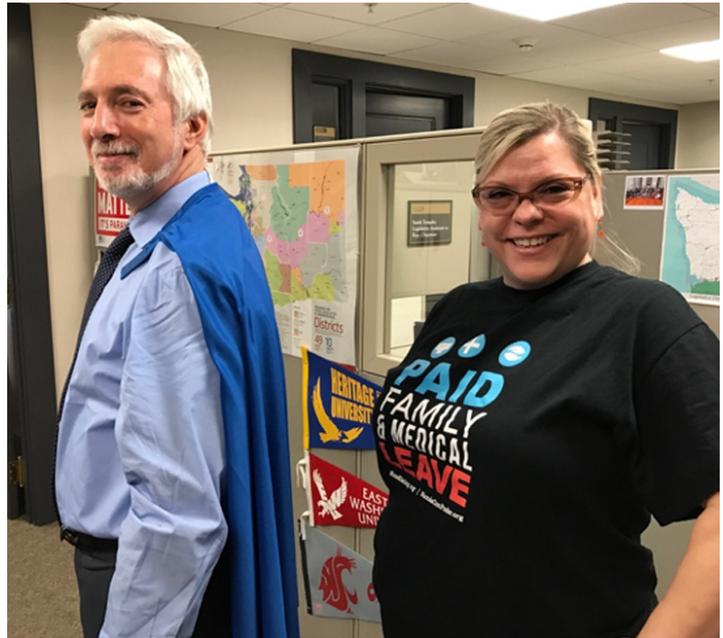
MomsRising members know that their stories are powerful and that's why so many have bravely shared their personal experiences related to paid family and medical leave with Washington legislators for more than ten years.

MomsRising member stories have been front and center in legislative meetings and committee hearings, as well as in the media, and have helped ground conversations in Olympia in the lived experiences of constituents. These stories have helped our members know they aren't alone and inspired them to action.

The power of our members and their stories was especially important during a 2017 House Appropriations Committee meeting when the Paid Family and Medical Leave bill MomsRising helped launch two months earlier was scheduled for a hearing for the first time in ten years.

MomsRising members seized the opportunity to show broad support for the proposal and delivered a petition to committee members, along with a superhero cape and a book of member stories, urging them to use their legislative super-powers to advance paid family and medical leave. The petition was signed by MomsRising members from every single legislative district in the state. MomsRising members in Olympia received backup from 800 additional members across the state who sent emails to committee members and inundated the Speaker of the House with phone calls.

Ultimately, the bill was voted out of committee and the proposed House budget included \$82 million for the program's start-up costs. The voices of moms, dads, and caregivers were instrumental in this HUGE milestone for paid family and medical leave.





Amplifying Our Voices in the Media

When MomsRising members share their stories with the media, they have the ability to change public opinion, build support, and influence the decisions legislators make. That's exactly what happened when MomsRising member Zandrea was featured in a timely story by the Seattle Times during the 2017 legislative session. Just as negotiations between Democrats, Republicans, advocates (including MomsRising) and business leaders were beginning, Zandrea's interview put a human face on paid family and medical leave and helped build support in Seattle and Olympia.





Families at the Negotiating Table

Whether it's to care for a newborn you swear already smiles, a mom who is critically ill, or a partner battling cancer, being there for family is what matters most. Every one of the 300 people from across Washington State who participated in our 2016 listening tour shared this sentiment.

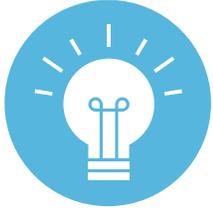
And yet, every single person also shared about a time when they, or someone they know, found it difficult to be there for family during times of sorrow or times of joy because of the financial burden. Families spoke of the challenges of navigating life's curveballs without paid family and medical leave, and small business

owners spoke of the challenges of supporting employees in times of need without any assistance. People from all walks of life agreed there was a problem that needed a solution.



While much of MomsRising's work is focused on education and outreach, we also bring the voices of our members directly to decision makers through legislative advocacy. This strategy became particularly important during the 2017 legislative session, when paid family and medical leave received interest from both sides of the aisle for the first time ever. Senator Joe Fain (R, 47th District) introduced a paid family and medical leave proposal that was considered alongside Senator Keiser's proposal. In late March, Democrats, Republicans, advocates, and business representatives joined together in a truly bipartisan effort to negotiate a paid family and medical leave program that would meet the unique needs of Washington families and businesses. As one of five representatives from the advocacy community, MomsRising helped bring the voices of moms and dads from the kitchen table to the negotiating table.

A representative from MomsRising was appointed to be on the small legislative negotiating team and worked hard to represent parents in the process of finalizing the legislation that would ultimately move forward. By June, negotiators reached agreement on a comprehensive paid family and medical leave policy endorsed by Democrats, Republicans, labor unions, MomsRising, and business leaders. Together, MomsRising and our negotiating partners, including the Economic Opportunity Institute, UFCW 21, the Washington State Labor Council, Legal Voice, and Teamsters Local 117 helped develop a strong paid family and medical leave program that we can all be proud of, one that empowers wonder moms, super dads, and the heroes of Main Street alike.



Victory for Families

After decades of organizing, mobilizing, and using our outside voices, MomsRising members played a HUGE role in shaping and bringing forward this monumental win for families, businesses, and the economy of Washington State. Together, our personal experiences painted a picture for legislators of what real families experience every day in communities across our state. And together, our advocacy helped forge a path to victory. When we rise, we are powerful!



We were part of a major win: The Washington State Legislature passed the negotiated Paid Family and Medical Leave policy with strong bipartisan support on June 30, 2017 and Governor Jay Inslee signed it into law on July 5, 2017. At the time it passed it was the strongest paid family and medical leave law in the nation.

MomsRising members were present to celebrate both occasions! In fact, MomsRising was invited to speak at the bill signing ceremony in recognition of all that moms, dads, and families did to ensure the success of this monumental policy.

“ We fought for moms like Celia in Seattle, who returned to work 2 weeks after nearly dying in childbirth. We fought for moms like Sarah in Liberty Lake, whose husband is fighting cancer without access to any paid leave. We fought for moms like Shelly from Olympia whose son was in heart failure for the first three months of his life – he needed his mom by his side. These moms and their families rose up with MomsRising to fight for a future where no one is forced to choose between caring for the family they love and the paycheck they depend on. And together, we won that future. ”

– Casey Osborn-Hinman, MomsRising





“MomsRising and their 40,000 Washington members were instrumental in our state’s paid family and medical leave victory. They brought the voices of mothers, fathers, and family caregivers right into the heart of the policy-making process. Washington’s paid family and medical leave law will not only strengthen families here in Washington, but it will also serve as a blueprint for other states to follow. I am so thankful for the partnership of MomsRising and their continued work to champion working moms and families. ”

– **Washington State Senator Karen Keiser (D, 33rd District)**



“MomsRising and their members were critical to winning paid family and medical leave in Washington State. MomsRising staff ensured that the experiences and needs of families were centered in crafting our state’s best-in-nation paid leave program and MomsRising members made thousands of contacts with my colleagues in the legislature to let them know that moms were counting on them to lead on leave. We couldn’t have done it without them. ”

– **Washington State Representative June Robinson (D, 28th District)**

What does this best-in-nation policy mean for Washington families and businesses? Beginning January 1, 2020, Washingtonians will benefit from Paid Family and Medical Leave, Washington’s new paid family and medical leave program, that includes 12 weeks of family leave and 12 weeks of medical leave with a 16-week annual cap (plus two additional weeks of paid leave for individuals who experience pregnancy complications). What’s more, Paid Family and Medical Leave includes a progressive wage replacement benefit (the first of its kind to be signed into law), universal coverage for all workers, and the costs for the program are shared between employees and employers.



Let the Good Times Roll

Celebrations didn't stop at the bill signing! Families in Everett, Des Moines, and Auburn came together to celebrate the historic passage of paid family and medical leave for all Washington workers.

Without the persistence and perseverance of these three prime legislative sponsors, paid family and medical leave in Washington State would not have been possible. Moms, dads, caregivers, and kiddos presented each legislator with a superhero cape in recognition of their superhero legislative powers.



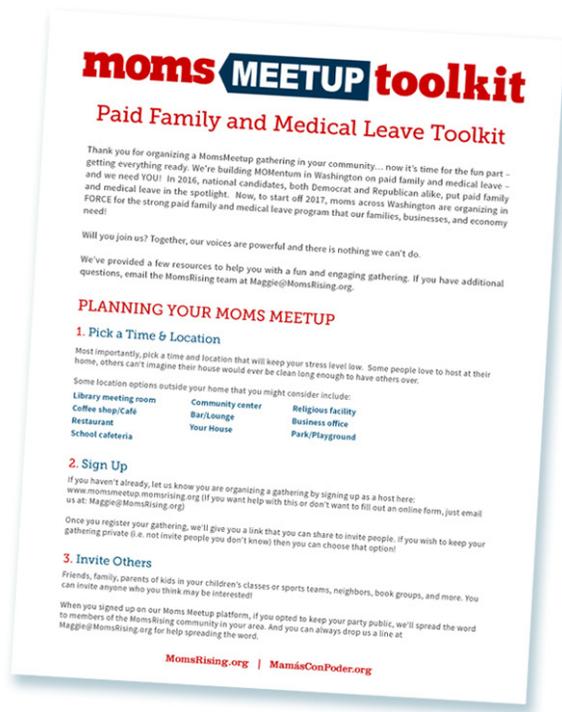
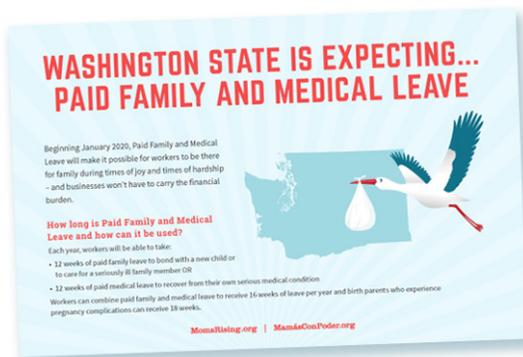


A Mom's Work is Never Done: Why We Need YOU for the Work Ahead

Together, we passed a best-in-nation paid family and medical leave policy that will lift Washington's families, businesses of all sizes, and economy. But our work doesn't stop here! Our work is needed now, more than ever, to be sure that all Washingtonians benefit from Paid Family and Medical Leave, Washington's new paid family and medical leave program. And that work begins with you!

You have the opportunity to make a difference locally by sharing information about Paid Family and Medical Leave with friends, family, and neighbors. You know your community best and your voice is trusted. Using MomsRising's simple and fun materials, you can help open access to this new program!

We are all powerful. But we're even more powerful together! Please join with MomsRising to help shout this good news far and wide! Visit momsrising.org/paidleavewa to check out our multilingual website to learn more about Paid Family and Medical Leave, download tools and resources, and take action to improve access to the program. The website even includes an easy-to-use calculator so you can estimate your Paid Family and Medical Leave benefit!



Visit momsrising.org/paidleavewa to learn more about Washington's new Paid Family and Medical Leave program and to take action.



Preview of Washington State's Happily Ever After Ending

With robust uptake of Washington's new Paid Family and Medical Leave program, Washington State's families, businesses of all sizes, and economy will experience tremendous benefits. We can look to other states that have already passed paid family leave programs, including California, to get a preview of how we'll all benefit. Paid family and medical leave...

Improves outcomes for children and mothers

Infant mortality drops by up to 25 percent with paid family leave. Moms with paid leave are also more likely to breastfeed exclusively. Breastfeeding is proven to reduce infant mortality, improve development, and reduce the risk of chronic disease later in life. In California, where paid family leave has been available for over 10 years, the median duration of breastfeeding doubled among new mothers who used the state's paid family leave program.

Builds strong and resilient families

Paid family and medical leave ensures that new parents and caregivers have the time they need to transition to the demands of parenthood, including the high cost of child care, without losing a paycheck when they need it most. A quarter of all poverty spells are caused by the birth of a new child. We know that poverty causes toxic stress that can impact the developing brain. Paid family and medical leave buffers against the likelihood of children being exposed to the damaging impacts of poverty.

Makes good business sense

Paid family and medical leave empowers small businesses to support their employees when they need it the most without carrying the financial burden alone. Studies of California's paid family leave program show that the program allows smaller businesses to compete with larger companies for the best talent, increases worker productivity, improves employee retention and lowers employers' turnover costs, and heightens American businesses' competitiveness in a global economy.

Saves taxpayer dollars

Paid family and medical leave saves taxpayer dollars by reducing enrollment in some public assistance programs. In fact, women with access to paid leave are 39 percent less likely to receive public assistance and 40 percent less likely to receive food stamps in the year following a child's birth. And families receiving public assistance are less likely to need additional forms of assistance after the birth of a child.

"California's paid family leave allowance meant that I did not have to put my daughter in daycare starting at 8 weeks of age. As a result I was able to continue breastfeeding her until she was 14 weeks old and I got the time my body needed to further recover from the pregnancy and labor. We are both healthier for it which means I am now a more productive worker than I otherwise would have been."

– *Lindsay, California*

"Being able to take 4 months paid leave from my job when my daughter was born was amazing. I was able to recover from my C-section, bond with my child, and breastfeed her. I was able to ease her (and me!) into the daycare routine. By the time I went back, I was confident in the care my child was receiving and I was ready to return to work."

– *Gabrielle, California*

MomsRising.org is an online and on-the-ground grassroots organization of more than a million people who are working to achieve economic security for all families in the United States.

MomsRising is working for paid family leave, flexible work options, affordable childcare, and for an end to the wage and hiring discrimination which penalizes so many others. MomsRising also advocates for better childhood nutrition, health care for all, toxic-free environments, and breastfeeding rights so that all children can have a healthy start.

Established in 2006, MomsRising and its members are organizing and speaking out to improve public policy and to change the national dialogue on issues that are critically important to America's families. In 2013, Forbes.com named MomsRising's web site as one of the Top 100 Websites For Women for the fourth year in a row and Working Mother magazine included MomsRising on its "Best of the Net" list.