MISSION POSSIBLE:
MAKE OUR FUTURE SO BRIGHT
WE HAVE TO WEAR SHADES

#MissionPossible
Building A Strong Economy For Families, Women And The Nation

MomsRising.org  |  MamásConPoder.org
Dear Member of Congress,

It’s 2015. And while some things are still Mission Impossible (sending people to Jupiter, flying cars), advancing #FairPay, #PaidSickDays, #HigherMinWage and other commonsense policies that boost our families and our economy, most certainly ARE #MissionPossible!

That’s why we are on #MissionPossible: Building a strong economy for families, women and the nation, and we need your commitment to bring our country’s public policies up to date to ensure this mission is accomplished.

Women are 50% of the labor force, yet our workplace policies and practices haven’t caught up to that reality. The fact is that mothers are in the workplace to stay: three-fourths of moms in the labor force and most families rely on the paychecks of moms to make ends meet.

It’s past time to advance public policies and workplace practices that boost businesses and families, like access to paid family leave (maternity/paternity leave); affordable childcare/early learning opportunities so parent can work and kids have safe, enriching places to go; earned income tax credits and child tax credits for families; paid sick days; equal pay; and an increase in the minimum wage.

Every day at MomsRising, an organization with an audience of over a million people, we hear stories from the frontlines of motherhood.

For example, Cynthia shared: "I worked for an advertising firm. At one event it was obvious just how many women worked for the ED. I asked him why. He told me, ‘I can pay them less.’ I was 23 and shocked. I hadn’t yet learned I was less valuable than a man."

And, Barbara came forward to share: “I didn’t have paid sick days so I had to postpone taking my kids to the doctor. One time, this resulted in my daughter having a serious untreated ear infection that harmed her hearing.”

Christina wrote: “I’m frustrated that our childcare costs more than our mortgage AND our car payments COMBINED.”

Meghan also explained how her “single mother, who worked 40+ hours a week as a court bailiff and earned less than $20K a year in salary, depended on the EITC to raise my sister and me. Today I am earning six figures as a product marketing manager at a huge software company in Silicon Valley. The EITC keeps families afloat and is a hope for our nation.”

These stories aren’t isolated incidents. *You can read more stories from women in every state of our nation by going here: http://moms.ly/MomsRising_MissionPossibleStories

81% of women in the U.S. have children by the time they are 44 years old. And right now maternal status (i.e. being a mom) is a greater predictor of wage and hiring discrimination than gender (i.e. being a woman). Too many moms and families are struggling. This hurts families and our economy alike. We can do better. Together, we can make sure that the future is so bright we will all have to wear shades.

And to be sure, the evidence is clear that a brighter future is #MissionPossible. It turns out that there is an excellent return on investment for both businesses and taxpayers alike when public policies like paid family leave, access to affordable childcare, and sick days are implemented. Among other things, businesses have higher retention and better employee performance, taxpayers save funds due to fewer grade repetitions, and reliance on long-term government entitlement programs drops. In fact, the returns on investment in these policies are so high that more than 177 countries have some form of paid leave for new moms (the U.S. isn’t one of them), more than 160 countries have a guaranteed minimum number of paid sick days for all workers (the U.S. also isn’t one of them); and studies show that for every $1 invested in early learning/childcare, there is a later $7 return for an average child and up to a $20 return for a high risk child. When workers get paid enough to support themselves and their families, individuals and local and national economies thrive. Raising the minimum wage would create 140,000 new jobs and help our economy by increasing household spending nationwide by about $48 billion.

It’s time to make #MissionPossible is #MissionAccomplished.

Please take a moment to read through the stories of moms and dads across the nation on the following pages and also here: http://moms.ly/MomsRising_MissionPossibleStories – and then please also take a deeper look at the public policy changes that are long overdue in our nation so that our families and economy can thrive.

Thank you for ALL you do!

Sincerely,

Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner,
Executive Director & Co-Founder MomsRising
Jennifer, Wahpeton, ND

My husband and I have a 9 month old son. We both work full time, plus my husband also farms part time with his father. We are having a hard time finding quality, affordable day-care, so my mother watches our son 3 days a week and a friend of ours watches him the other 2 days. My mother doesn’t charge us anything, our friend’s rate is pretty reasonable.

We have been very fortunate to have this arrangement so far, but we will have to put our son in day-care soon, as my mother will not be able to watch him for much longer. I would prefer to stay at home with my son, but we cannot afford that either. I wish we had some better options. Part time options would be the best. I know there are many out there with no options.

Amy, Clayton, DE

I had my baby girl slightly over two years ago. As a public elementary school teacher, I was not given paid maternity leave. My husband and I began saving for my maternity leave the minute we found out we were expecting a child. We cut back on our spending and worked to condense our bills. Being a teacher, I planned my maternity leave around my due date so my students did not have to experience anxiety wondering when I would be gone. I had to use every one of the personal days that I had intentionally been saving throughout my previous five years of employment.

I was able to use three weeks of short term dis-ability, which allowed me to recieve 75% of my pay during this time. After this ran out, I used the rest of my saved sick days. After my sick days ran out, I was able to use FMLA in order to prolong my stay at home with my baby. During these three months, I received no pay.

Taking this time to be the best parent I can be cost my family a great deal of sacrifice. Being a brand new parent is challenging enough, but worrying about being able to pay the bills on top of it is even worse. Worst of all though would not having the ability to stay home as long as I did. Some families are not able to sacrifice enough for a parent to stay home and the new-born must be put into the care of a stranger.

As one of the most advanced countries in the world, it is a disgrace that we do not support new parents. Our country is supposedly concerned with producing highly educated students, but we are not willing to be a society that supports our students and families. In order to experience success, society needs to support families.

It is embarrassing that we have no support system in place for new parents. My whole career is based on taking care of other people’s children, however, I was not given any support in taking care of my child. I sacrifice my time on a regular basis for other people’s children and to help develop my students into pro- ductive members of society, but
not being given any financial support during maternity leave makes it very difficult to continue to be motivated.

Mothers need to give 100% of their energy to the proper care and love of their newborn. In order to make society a better place, new parents need to be supported.

Bonny Lynn, AK

I was fortunate to find a woman who had children the same age as mine. Our children went to school together. Our youngest boys became friends and one mother would take care of the boys while the other mother helped out at the school. When I needed to re-turn to teaching, she let me pay her to take care of my son.

The two boys are still very close after 30 years, having been ushers in each others weddings. Living so far away from our birth families in California, we’ve become family to each other in Alaska. I am constantly thankful. I might have missed out on seeing a few of my son’s firsts, he had the experiences I would have given him.

Ingrid, Los Angeles, CA

At my current company, all the women are paid less by at least 5% or more due to just being a woman. I was hiring a new analyst to work for me. I would be his supervisor and when I found out how much they were offering him— over $100K plus bonus — I was appalled.

I complained to my superiors who raised my salary by 10% in order to be above him. But seriously, just making 10% more than a new analyst while I’m a Vice President! I complained to HR but all they said was that I could always look for another job elsewhere.

Colleen, Heath, OH

In the early 90s, I was a young, single mom and I worked for a local bank as a teller. I was given increasing responsibility because of my job performance. However, I learned that a male colleague, who was the same age and had the same education level and less responsibility, was making significantly more per hour than I was.

Even after receiving a promotion and a 10-cent/hour raise, I decided to seek other employment. I’m so glad to not work for that company anymore (or bank there).

Adrienne, Boca Raton, FL

I worked for a major computer company for many years and when I was hired I was told that to disclose your salary information was grounds for dismissal. Since that time, I realized my male counterparts made more than I but had no written proof.

No confirmed way I could challenge their system. A fellow employee, female, who did not receive timely salary increases was told that her husband picked her up daily in a late model car and did not need an increase because her husband was well employed.

Marta, Manassas, VA

I have been waiting tables since 2001. I have 3 children and it’s been quite a struggle to make ends meet. I am lucky that I live in a nice area where people typically tip 15%. I have always wondered why restaurants are allowed to pay their staff such mini-
There are many people that won’t tip, will under-tip and will leave you $2 regardless of the amount of the bill or the amount of work you did for them. Forget vacations, unexpected emergencies, or having a sick day. Pretty much all of that is out of the question if you want to maintain your family’s basics up and running.

**Cynthia, Jacksonville, FL**

I am a married mother of one who lives in Florida. My husband works at a temporary job that he has had for the last two years making minimum wage, and I work for Red Roof Hotels, also at minimum wage. Our health insurance through the new healthcare system costs us nearly $600 a month, and our daughter’s adds over $100 more to that now, because according to the federal government, we do not qualify for assistance.

My husband pays child support for three children in their later teen years, and our daughter is eighteen months old. Our car insurance is nearly $100 a month. In order to pay basic health insurance and car insurance (which is required in Florida), and have food for our daughter, we went into debt paying for our home, and were evicted.

We now live in a three hundred square-foot room at the hotel I work for, which deducts $300 every two weeks from my check. I have had to go on WIC to be able to provide enough food for our daughter, and both my husband and I eat one meal a day. My husband is currently searching for a second job, which puts us in the position of taking on another bill in order to have childcare a night when I work, and we can’t even meet our expenses now.

When you say the minimum wage is enough to live on, I don’t know what cost of living you are looking at, but to me it seems impossible to surmise that it would come even close to being able to meet even the most basic of needs.

**Sally, Calhoun, GA**

Ever since I was sixteen I have had a job and every job I have had except one I was paid minimum wage. I have never been paid more than the minimum allowed by the law.

The only time was when I worked for a Burger King restaurant where the owner started at minimum wage but within 90 days everyone got paid $8.50 and that made me feel great and self-sufficient. I would welcome the minimum wage to go up so that a person can live comfortably and not worry how to cover bills.

**Heidi, Monmouth, ME**

With the births of each of my children came the extreme financial stress of being out of work (and not getting paid) for more than half of my twelve week maternity leave.

Having a child is an amazing thing, but it is also a very difficult adjustment for many, especially first-time, moms. I think everyone would agree that it can be very stressful learning the ropes and trying to figure everything out, along with take care of yourself. The added burden of financial setbacks, for our family, anyway, probably doubled this stress.

Paid maternity leave would be LIFE CHANGING for millions of family in this country, leaving more energy to focus on the new, amazing miracle they just brought into this world, and less worrying about whether the oil company will deliver fuel with your unpaid balance on file.

**Luis, Seattle, WA**

Last year my newborn son was hospitalized for 2 months with a seizure disorder. We did not know whether he would live or not. Because my wife does not have sick days she still had to work while he went through a NICU hospitalization. It’s about time we keep up with the civilized world and have family leave and sick leave laws.
Kelly, Madison, WI
I worked in the restaurant industry and did not have paid leave. I had been at my place of work full-time for 11 years. I tried to go back to work part-time after a month but I wasn’t able to do so and continue to breastfeed. I tried for four more months and eventually had to quit my job.

The combination of not having a private place to pump and not having any paid time off helped make my decision. Breastfeeding and my baby’s health was my number one priority. Now, my husband works two jobs and barely sees our baby. The restaurant/bar industry relies on honest, loyal employees, but they make it hard to be one and a working mom.

Dawn, Manchester, MD
I used to be a kitchen manager in a restaurant, and only the salaried managers (not me) had paid sick leave. As a result, employees often came to work sick because they couldn’t afford to lose a day’s pay.

I remember going to work with strep throat once—I was running a fever and was so sick that I had to sit on a stack of milk crates in order to work.

Eventually I was persuaded by coworkers to go home because I was such a risk to the health of our customers. Employees shouldn’t have to make those kinds of choices, and the public shouldn’t be put at risk by companies unwilling to protect public health by acknowledging the humanity of their employees—we all get sick sometimes!

Michele, Salt Lake City, UT
Although I don’t get paid sick days I’m extremely fortunate when my first child was little I worked as a school social worker and the district offered paid sick days. I also had a husband at the time. Working in the school system I saw first hand how vulnerable parents, especially single moms working for minimum wage, are when they aren’t able to get paid sick days.

Mothers often brought their sick kids to school because missing one more day would literally mean losing their job.

We need to allow parents—usually moms and especially single moms—to be able to stay home and take care of their kids. It’s better for the parent, the sick child, and the other children at their school or daycare who we don’t want to be exposed to a sick child.

Let’s try being smart and progressive. Much more of a win-win way of spending money than supporting a mom and kids who are homeless, being displaced and insecure, because she lost her job and could no longer pay the rent.

Rebecca, Sulphur, LA
I am a single mother of two with no paid sick days. Having this option would be extremely beneficial to me and my family. If I’m not sick, it’s one of the kids.

I opt to stay home so that I don’t disrupt the work environment by spreading illness. But the lost wages and added stress, by doing so, has a negative effect on my health and my household environment.

Which is more important: work or family? Of course they go hand in hand. However, this is a common situation that leaves many wondering about the family/work life initiatives many corporations claim to have incorporated.

PAID SICK DAYS

Quick Fact
80% of low wage workers, and 40% of private sector workers don’t have a single paid sick day.

SOURCE: http://go.nationalpartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=psd_toolkit_quickfacts

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit

Quick Fact
9.4 million people, including 5 million children, were lifted out of poverty by the EITC and Child Tax Credit in 2013 alone. And 1.4 million veteran and armed-forces families with children receive the EITC or the Child Tax Credit.


**Sarah, Dongola, IL**

Thanks to the tax credit our lives were greatly enhanced in my family. As a single mom I depended on the EITC and Child Tax Credit to purchase needed items I could not afford during the year. I was able to pay off medical expenses and purchase items I had been putting off all year. This tax credit improved our lives greatly. The Child Tax Credit was a true benefit for our lives. Please, do not end this tax credit.

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**Rena, Tillamook, OR**

Every year at tax time when we get our refund our family gets to catch up on overdue bills and buy the things we can’t normally buy the rest of the year. An example is our yearly trip to one of the bigger cities to get the whole family new shoes. The only pair we usually get each year. I feel a hard working family deserves this even if they aren’t one of the rich.

All American’s should live without poverty. We have so much that it’s a shame some families suffer while others have more than they could ever use. The American dream could still be a thing if EVERYONE in America could understand this. Now, it is just a fairy tale that will never come true no matter how hard we work.

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**Arnita, Memphis, TN**

As a single mom with almost nonexistent child support, and my two jobs still not being enough to make ends meet, the EITC was a Godsend! 2014 was a tough year: without warning the first workday of the new year I received a letter from my supervisor stating my days and hours were cut from 4 days a week to 1 day a week for the next month and then I would be on call as a sub. My heart dropped!

The job was then divided into 2 jobs to ensure employees wouldn’t be considered full time and qualify for Obamacare and full time benefits. If several people hadn’t resigned I wouldn’t have any hours. I got even further behind on my bills and into debt. The EITC money helped me catch up on bills, take care of basic needs such as clothes, shoes, personal hygiene and grooming items, gas to get to work, pay tuition to my child’s preschool, along with memberships to the local zoo, children’s museum and science museum.

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**Tammy, Philadelphia, PA**

Our young family has been struggling through this difficult economy in ways that we did not envision. Just as we had our first child, my husband and I initiated career changes that seemed promising upon graduation from our respective universities. With two Master’s degrees with honors, my career in social justice and disarmament work in the non-profit sector is fulfilling in many ways but is not proving to be very lucrative nor very secure given the limitations of funding in today’s economy. After two and a half years working to rebuild and find funding for a non-profit, I am facing unemployment next month. The potentially comparable positions would involve a pay cut of nearly $20,000. As the family’s primary bread-winner, this pay cut could be devastating.

My husband’s career as an urban planner started well but just when he moved into the private sector it came crumbling down as the economy collapsed. His company downsized, he lost his job and the urban planning field froze rendering him with an unacceptable gap in his resume. He has since begun a new career in real estate that is painfully slow in picking up pace. He supplements his real estate income with part-time employment in a grocery store. The hours are complicated and the value is limited given that there are no health benefits offered.

Our struggle to keep health insurance has been a hurdle that I think should be unacceptable in the world’s wealthiest country. Likewise, keeping our first son in quality pre-school throughout these challenging years was another hurdle that we wish we did not have to face alone. We are now juggling our schedules to manage our careers with our second child that we can not afford to put in infant daycare.

The Child Tax Credit helped us offset the huge cost of funding our son’s quality pre-K. For this help, we are very grateful. The cost of infant daycare is insurmountable for us at this point but the Child Tax Credit will help us make ends meet as I face another job search and my husband tries to conduct real estate transactions, works a part-time job and continues to pursue a career in urban planning. We both work hard and do good work in our community. The Child Tax Credit is essential in offsetting the costs that our family faces as we work our way through the insecurity of unemployment and underemployment in today’s economy. I hope that all families facing tough times in this stagnant economy can rely on the Child Tax Credit to supplement them in their time of need.

“The cost of infant daycare is insurmountable for us at this point but the Child Tax Credit will help us make ends meet...”

**Tammy, Philadelphia, PA**
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 2012, Forbes.com named MomsRising’s web site as one of the Top 100 Websites For Women for the fourth year in a row. In 2013, Working Mother magazine included MomsRising on its “Best of the Net” list.